

JUNE 23, 1922

No. 873

FAME
• AND •

7 Cents

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

AFTER A SQUARE DEAL
OR THE RICHEST CLAIM IN THE WEST
AND OTHER STORIES.

Self-Made Man



As the rascals bore the bound and gagged form of Jack toward the mouth of the mountain cave, a bearded stranger suddenly appeared out of the dark interior. "Stop where you are!" he said, menacing them with his revolver.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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NEW YORK, JUNE 23, 1922

Price 7 Cents

AFTER A SQUARE DEAL

OR, THE RICHEST CLAIM IN THE WEST

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Which Introduces the Hero and Others.

"Where have yer been all this time?" demanded Noah Sprague, general store-keeper and postmaster of Stormhaven village, addressing his general assistant and boy-of-all-work who had just come into the store.

"You know I've been around delivering the afternoon orders and taking new ones," replied the poorly-dressed boy, whose name was Jack Wilson.

"That's what yer were supposed to be doin', but it don't take no three hours to attend to that," snorted Sprague. "You've been dawdlin' yer time somewhere—playin' ball with the boys, most likely."

"No, sir, I haven't been playing ball," replied Jack, in a decided tone.

"Then I want to know what kept yer away so long."

"I stopped at Widow White's to leave some goods and see if she wanted me to bring anything on my morning round," explained Jack.

"Did it take yer an hour to do that?" said the store-keeper, sarcastically.

"Just before I got there Widow White was taken suddenly ill," went on the boy. "There was no one to run for a doctor but her daughter, and she couldn't leave her mother, so I volunteered to go."

"Oh, yer did?"

"I drove to the house of the nearest doctor, but he was out, so I had to go to the other end of the village for Dr. Green. That took a little time. Then after I took him to the widow's cottage I had to wait to take him home again."

"What for? Why didn't he come in his own rig?"

"It would have taken time for him to hitch his horse to his buggy, and as the widow seemed to be very sick, I told him to jump into the wagon, promising to fetch him back. It was a good thing I got him to the cottage as quickly as I did, for on the way back the doctor told me that the widow might have died had we been ten minutes later."

"What was the matter with her?"

"Acute indigestion. I had to go to the drug store, three blocks away, and have a prescription filled, and that took a little time, too. When I got back with the medicine the widow was better, and then I continued on my route. Now you know why I was away so long."

At that moment a girl entered the store, and Jack went to wait on her. Sprague went to the end of the counter to get the mail bags ready to send to the station. Here was situated the letter boxes, with glass fronts painted with the letters of the alphabet in order from A to Y. There were also a dozen lock boxes, numbered from 1 to 12, which the postmaster rented out, chiefly to summer visitors, for \$1 for three months. No. 1 was always hired by the summer hotel for its season of three months, but it wasn't large enough to hold all the mail that came to the guests during the rush time of July and August, so the overflow was handed to the hotel messenger tied up in a bundle. The hotel opened about the middle of June, and had been in operation a week at the time our story opens.

Stormhaven received two mails a day either way—in the morning and late in the afternoon. It was part of Jack's duties to meet the two Boston mail trains and get the mail-bags. The station agent took charge of the bags left by the trains going the other way, and as they were dropped shortly before the Boston trains came in, the boy got them when he showed up there. After he waited on the girl and a man who came in after a plug of tobacco, it was time for him to start for the station for the evening mail, and take along the outgoing mail. He picked up the two mail bags—one going eastward and the other westward—shoved them under the seat of the wagon and drove off. A hundred yards from the store he was hailed by a friend of his named Bill Buster.

"Bound for the station?" said Billy.

"I guess you know I am. Want a ride?"

"I don't mind," said Billy, clambering up on the seat.

"What's the matter with your eye? Been fighting?" asked Jack, observing his companion's swollen optic, which had a blue ring around it.

"Bill Gossett handed me that this morning because I didn't move around quick enough to suit him."

Gossett was one of the boatmen of Stormhaven who catered to the summer visitors. When the town was bereft of visitors he spent his time loafing and fishing. He secured Billy from the poor-farm some years before, signing a paper in which he bound himself to furnish the boy a home and teach him the business he followed himself; he also promised to be kind to the lad. He carried out the first two articles, though the home he gave Billy was nothing to brag

about, for he lived in an old weather-beaten cabin in a cove among the rocks just beyond the village limits. The word "kindness" was not in Gossett's lexicon.

He handled his apprentice without gloves, and the older Billy became, the more he was tempted to run away; and it is probable he would have done so but for the friendship that grew up between him and Jack Wilson, who was also an orphan, though he had never been an inmate of the poor-farm, and was under Noah Sprague's thumb, just as Billy was under Gossett's, with this difference, that while the boatman was Billy's legal master, Sprague was Jack's legal guardian.

"Gossett is a brute," said Jack, with emphasis.

"I wish he'd fall off the rocks some night when he comes home loaded. If something doesn't happen to him soon I believe I'll run away to Boston."

"I wouldn't blame you if you did. Why don't you report his conduct to the overseer of the poor-farm?"

"What good would it do? He might get a calling down, but it wouldn't make him any better. He'd lay a rope's end on me for it, and I wouldn't be able to walk for a week. I threatened to complain once, and he told me he'd murder me if I ever did it. He said the overseer wouldn't do anything anyway, as he wouldn't want to be bothered looking up another place for me."

"I think Gossett and Sprague would make a good team. We've a pair of fine bosses between us. Sprague is just as unbearable in his way as Gossett is in his. He knows better, though, than to attempt to use force with me, for I'm big and strong enough to lay him out if he did. My father made a great mistake in leaving me to his tender mercies when he went out West to better his prospects. Up to the time of my father's death Sprague treated me fairly decent, because he got remittances that covered my keep, and because my father was liable to return some time and learn the truth; but the news of his death altered my condition considerably. Since then I've had to work for my living. The surprising thing is that Sprague should get himself appointed my guardian. I suppose he did it to maintain a grip on me, as he found me too useful to use."

Jack drove up alongside of the back platform of the station, threw the mail-bags out of the wagon and followed them. Telling Billy to remain in the vehicle, he dragged the pouches away with him. The whistle of the locomotive announced the approach of the Boston train, and a minute later it slowed up at the station. There was an exchange of mail-bags between Jack and a postal clerk on the mail car, four passengers got off the cars, several trunks and suit-cases were put off, with sundry express matters, and then the train went on. Dick got another mail pouch from the agent, and handed him a lean one. He carried the bags to the wagon, and was about to drive away when a tall, bearded, sun-burned man, in a suit of store clothes that he didn't seem comfortable in, came to the edge of the platform, and said:

"The station-agent told me you were connected with thar post-office here."

"He told you right."

"The postmaster's name are Noah Sprague?"

"Yes," replied Jack, looking curiously at the man, who, while evidently a stranger, appeared to know the store-keeper.

"Waal, I'll allow I came this way to see him, so if you ain't got any objection I'd like you to give me a lift as far as thar post-office."

"Jump in," said Jack, wondering who the stranger was.

He stepped in, squatted down, and Jack started on his way back.

CHAPTER II.—The Stranger from Show Down.

It was dusk by that time, and the croak of the bullfrogs and other country noises came plainly to the ear. The station was a mile beyond the village limits, and a stage met all trains. It was driven by its owner, who made his headquarters at the village inn. He carried all passengers to their destination for the sum of a quarter, charging another quarter on trunks and ten cents for suit-cases. He would gladly have carried the mail-bags to and fro for a moderate charge, and thus saved Sprague the trouble of sending special for them twice a day, but the store-keeper wouldn't part with a cent for the accommodation, choosing to sacrifice Jack's time, and the wear and tear on his rig, rather than give up the price.

"Say, sonny, are your name Wilson?" asked the stranger, as the coach passed them.

"Yes; how did you guess it?" said Jack, in surprise.

"The station-agent told me."

"Oh," ejaculated the boy.

"You live with Noah Sprague, I reckon?"

"Yes, he's my guardian."

"Your guardeen, eh?"

"Yes. You've come from the West, haven't you?"

"What makes you think so, sonny?"

"You look like a Westerner."

"I do? Ever seen one before?"

"No."

"Then how do you know I look like one?"

"You look different from any one I've ever seen before. I have seen such a hat as you wear in pictures of cowboys."

"You're a good guesser. I'll allow I've just came from thar wild and woolly."

"Did you know my father—George Wilson?" asked Jack.

"You father? Was he out West?"

Jack looked disappointed.

"Yes, he went West several years ago—out in Colorado."

"Wharabouts in Colorado?"

"He was in difference places—camps he called them in his letters to me. The last place—where he died—was called Placer Gulch."

"Waal, I came from Show Down."

"In Colorado?"

"I reckon."

"A mining camp?"

"It warn't nothin' else. A reg'lar mushroom."

"What do you mean by that?"

"It growed up in a night."

"In one night?"

"So to speak, sonny. Seein' as you don't understand how things come about in thar minin' districts, I'll tell you how Show Down grew from three or four shanties, occupied by a dozen chaps who came thar prospectin', liked thar looks of things and stayed to see if matters would pan out," said the stranger, taking a chew of tobacco, then running his fingers through his long beard.

"I'd like to hear," said Jack, letting his horse jog slowly along the road.

"Thar was a Chinyman in thar party they'd brought along from Poker Flat to do thar washin' in one of thar shanties and he was washin' outdoors. One mornin' after a heavy rain, which had flooded his hut, he was diggin' a ditch around thar shack to carry thar water away next time, an' thar bottom suddenly fell out of a part of ditch and dumped thar Chinyman into a big hole. He couldn't get out, and yelled to beat thar band. It was some time before anybody heard him, but one of thar boys, returnin' for a pick-axe, discovered his predicament, got a rope and started to haul him out. More of thar ground give away and dumped thar prospector in alongside thar Chinyman. To make a long story short, that thar hole proved to be alive with gold quartz, which nobody had suspected was thar. Thar prospector lost no time stakin' out a claim for himself, which took in all thar ground, includin' thar shanties, tharabout. When his pals came to dinner he showed 'em thar strike he'd made, and they hastened to stake out claims all around him. Thar Chinyman was promised a rake-off. He was sent to Poker Flat with a couple of cayuses for supplies. He spread thar news of thar strike at Show Down, and that started a stampede for thar place. Inside of three days thar were fifty tents and a score of shacks goin' up, and thar population jumped from a dozen to nigh 300. In a week thar was 500 men on thar ground, a hotel and dance hall under way, and a sawmill erected. From a camp you could hardly see with a spyglass, Show Down became a hustlin' minin' town in no time. It grewed up jest like a mushroom, and from thar looks of things it was a sure bet it would be a city in a month, with a railroad in thar perspective."

"And you've come from there?"

"I reckon."

"Do you expect to find it looking like a city when you get back?"

"Naw."

"A big town, then?"

"Naw."

"But you said——"

"I said it became a hustlin' minin' town in no time. That was two years ago."

"Well?" said Jack, deeply interested.

"It lasted jest a month."

"The town?" cried the boy, in surprise.

"Yes. Everybody was disapp'inted."

"How so?"

"Thar only gold worth speakin' of was all in thar claim thar Chinyman discovered."

"Is that so?"

"That's so, sonny. How would you like to own sich a claim?"

"First rate."

The stranger chuckled.

"What did the people do when they found no gold in Show Down?"

"They done what they always do under sich circumstances—they lit out, leavin' thar finished and unfinished shacks behind 'em."

"Not all of them, surely?"

"Waal, a few stayed—the original bunch—and helped work thar lucky strike hole thar Chinyman found. It was reported to be fabulously rich, assaying \$350 to thar ton on thar average. Though thar original rush petered out, strangers, hearing reports of thar mine, kept comin', and for three months Show Down put up a pretty good bluff. Thar mine looked so good that thar man who owned thar claim decided to form a comp'ny, take in his friends, and begin real minin' on a big scale. A road was surveyed through thar wilderness, thar sites for an electric power house, a forty stamp mill, and other buildin's picked out, when all of a sudden——"

"Well?" said Jack.

"The bottom fell out of thar lucky strike——"

"The bottom fell out of it?" said Jack, who took the expression literally.

"The ore petered out and that was thar end of it."

"Where did the gold go?"

"Whar goes thar snow go when thar spring sunshine melts it? You don't see any of it lyin' 'round loose, do you?"

"Why should it disappear so suddenly?"

"Ask me somethin' easy, sonny."

"What became of the mine?"

"It warn't no mine, only thar beginnin' of one. Jest a big hole in thar ground. It's thar yet?"

"The man who owned the claim abandoned it, I suppose, when he found no more gold in it?"

"No. He hung on, hopin' to find thar golden ledge ag'in."

"Did he find any encouragement?"

"I reckon not, but he always believed in it up to thar time he turned up his toes."

"He's dead, then?"

"Been dead these two years."

"Did he leave the claim to any one?"

"He left it to a chap here in trust for his son."

"What was done about it?"

"Nothin'. It warn't worth botherin' about."

"What sort of looking place is Show Down now? You've just come from there."

"It's as dead as a salted mackerel. It's as lonesome lookin' as an old graveyard. The shacks are droppin' to pieces, and thar grass are growin' 'round 'em and all over thar roadway that used to be called a street, the only one it had. Thar only inhabitants are a stray grizzly, a few rattlers and sich varmints."

"Here we are at Sprague's general store and the post-office," said Jack, reining in.

CHAPTER III.—"It's the Richest Claim In Thar West."

"Come right in and I'll introduce you to Mr. Sprague," said Jack to the man from Show Down. "Good-night, Bill. See you to-morrow if I can."

With a mail-bag under each arm, the boy and

the stranger entered the store. The postmaster was waiting on a customer, and the introduction had to be deferred until he was at liberty. As there were several persons, including the hotel messenger, waiting for mail, Jack unlocked the bags, dumped their contents on the counter behind the letter boxes, and proceeded to distribute it into the boxes. The people interested in the mail gathered on the other side and watched the letters, cards and papers go into the boxes, speculating whether anything had come for them when they saw something glide into a box bearing their initial. In the meantime the customer went away and Mr. Sprague looked at the stranger, who was standing back, sampling a handful of dried apples he had helped himself to.

"Can I sell yer some of them dried apples?" asked the store-keeper, who strongly objected to the free-and-easy way of the Westerner.

"I guess not," replied the man, helping himself to several soda crackers, which he proceeded to munch.

"I shall have to charge yer for what yer eatin', my friend," said Sprague, in a sour tone.

"All right. Slap it up on your slate," replied the stranger, coolly. "While you're about it you kin add this hyar bottle of ginger ale to thar account, though I'd rather hev whisky."

With a movement of his thumb the stranger pushed the catch off the cork, which flew ceilingward with a loud pop, and put the neck of the bottle to his month. The store-keeper was fairly paralyzed by the nerve of the man, but as the stranger was a big, strong fellow, and looked bad, he was afraid to do more than protest that he didn't give credit to people he didn't know.

"Waal, how much do I owe you for this hyar lunch?" said the Westerner.

Sprague thought fifteen cents would square it.

"You can take three more crackers and some more dried apples for that," he said.

"All right. Hev you got change for a ten-dollar bill?"

The storekeeper assured him that he had.

"Glad to hear it. I'll fetch thar tenner thar next time I call. Your name are Noah Sprague, I reckon?"

Sprague growingly admitted it was. The stranger leaned toward him and said in a hoarse whisper:

"I'm from Placer Gulch. My name are Jim Whaley."

Sprague started as though he had trodden on a venomous reptile. The name was familiar to him as George Wilson's pard in Colorado. Whaley was with Wilson when he died, or, at least, he had written he was. It was through Whaley that Sprague received the deed of the mining claim Wilson owned at the time of his death, together with a document transferring the claim to Sprague in trust for his son Jack, and postal orders representing all the money left by Wilson, the same to be used for his son's benefit. The letter, which accompanied the enclosures, stated that the claim had looked like a winner for a while, then it petered out and was (at that date) regarded as worthless. The writer, however, remarked that Wilson died full of confidence that it would ultimately prove valuable, and he wanted his son to benefit if it did, hence the document.

He wished Sprague to understand that he (the writer) did not share in the dead man's confidence as to the claim ever panning out. He was a practical prospector and miner, and had stuck by Wilson to the last, not because he saw any future in the claim, but because he was Wilson's pard and would not desert him. He was sorry there was nothing in the claim for the boy's sake, and he hoped Sprague would do the right thing by the lad now his father was dead and unable to send any more remittances in the future. Such were the chief features of the letter, forwarded to the store-keeper two years since, and duly received by him, and Sprague had read it over so often that he almost knew it by heart. As the store-keeper was conscious that he hadn't done the right thing by his former friend Wilson's son, the unexpected appearance of Whaley was not welcome to him. He had an idea that Westerners were men accustomed to stand no nonsense, and this man looked it.

Having been Wilson's partner, he might be supposed to have a certain interest in the son, and having come East on business or pleasure, he had taken the trouble to look up the lad, and learn how things were coming with him. He did not know that Whaley had ridden from the station with Jack. Had he known it he would have had a fit. It was enough to know that the man had come to Stormhaven and reached his store. Sprague wasn't naturally a quick thinker, but on this occasion he outdone himself in that respect. He must prevent the Westerner from having an interview with Jack, and get rid of him as soon as possible. Screwing his wizened old features into as friendly a look as was possible for him, he held out his hand and said:

"Come into my little parlor and have a drink, Mr. Whaley," said Sprague, anxious to get the visitor away from the store while Jack was busy with the mail.

"Of course I'll hev a drink with you. I take whisky."

"You shall have it. I have a bottle I take my nightcaps from. It's a particular brand—better'n I sell in the store," said Sprague, grasping him by the arm and leading him into the little sitting-room off the store.

Shutting the door carefully, he went to a closet and produced a bottle and two glasses. Then he turned up the lamp which stood on the table.

"How's thar boy—George's son?"

"Fine," said Sprague, enthusiastically. "He is away at college."

"What's that? Away at college?" cried Whaley, in surprise.

"Yes. I'm bringin' the lad up jest as if he was my own son. Nothin' is too good for him. It's rather expensive, but yer see I can't do less for my friend's son. I'm a widower, and when I die all I have will go to the boy. It ain't much, but what it is he's welcome to it."

Whaley stared at the store-keeper. He would have believed him if he hadn't talked to the boy, who had given pretty good evidence that he was George Wilson's son. As it was, he had his doubts, and he wondered why Sprague was giving him such a line of talk. His knowledge of men in general told him there was something behind it. Noah Sprague didn't look like a person overburdened with the milk of human

kindness. The one letter he had received from the postmaster in reply to his own had impressed Whaley with the notion that Sprague wasn't what Wilson believed him to be. And his personal inspection of the store-keeper confirmed that opinion. For reasons of his own he was quite satisfied with the looks and conversation of the postmaster. It tickled him immensely to think that Sprague was hiding something from him. It would probably help out the plans that brought him East.

"So you've been good to thar boy, hev you?" he said.

"My friend, if he had been my own son——"

"Enough said. Shake," and Whaley held out his hairy, brown hand.

Sprague held back and looked dubiously at the Westerner's paw. He objected to experiencing a second grip of the vise.

"Pardon me, but my fingers are kinder tender," he said.

"Then you do thar shakin' yourself."

Sprague was willing to compromise that way.

"Help yourself to the whisky," he said, pushing the bottle forward.

Whaley was not backward in taking a liberal dose, while the postmaster helped himself sparingly.

"Your very good health, Mr. Whaley," said the store-keeper, with one of his stereotyped smiles.

"Same to you. Here's lookin' at you," and Whaley drained his glass at a gulp.

"Would you like a little water?" asked Sprague.

"What for?"

"To wash down the whisky."

"I never use water except to wash myself, unless I'm particerly thirsty and can't get anythin' else," said Whaley. "So thar boy's at college, you say?"

"Yes, yes."

"When d'ye expect him home?"

"Not for several weeks yet."

"Waal, I've got to be back to Placer Gulch afore that, so I reckon I won't hev thar pleasure of seein' him."

Sprague felt much relieved on hearing that. He hoped the Westerner wouldn't delay leaving the village. As he had come to see him (Sprague) there was now no reason why he should prolong his stay.

"Do you know, pard, I had an idee that that thar boy who brought me over from thar station was George Wilson's son," said Whaley, cocking his eye at the store-keeper, while he helped himself, without an invitation, to another glass of whisky.

"What boy?" said Sprague, looking a bit startled.

"Oh, thar chap that brought thar mail. He's got George's eyes, and thar's somethin' in his manner that puts me in mind of my old pard."

The postmaster began to perspire with anxiety.

"I thought you came to the village in the stage," he said in an unsteady tone.

"No. I asked thar station-agent if he knew you, and he said he did, and that you was still postmaster of thar village and kept thar biggest gen'ral store in thar place. He p'inted out your boy to me, and said he'd take me right to thar store jest as well as not. It would save me a quarter, which was what thar stage

man charged for carryin' a passenger to thar hotel or anywhar else in thar village. I didn't mind thar quarter, but I thought it would be more convenient to ride over with thar boy, so I spoke to him and he told me to jump in, which I did, and he fetched me over and promised to introduce me to you, but as you was busy when he came into thar store, he told me to wait a minute till you was at liberty. Before he got thar chance to do thar honors, you introduced yourself. That reminds me, I owe you fifteen cents. Thar's thar money, pard."

"Never mind. I won't charge yer nothin' for what yer ate," said the store-keeper nervously. "Did yer have any talk with the boy?"

"I reckon I did most of thar talkin', but he said enough to give me thar idee he was George Wilson's son. That couldn't be if Wilson's son was in college."

"Of course not. The boy is——"

"George Wilson's son, pard. Don't try to pull thar wool over me, 'cause I'm too old a bird to be fooled by that college yarn of yours. Own up and tell me what you're hidin' from me."

"My dear friend——"

"None of that, Sprague. I've been sizin' you up since I clapped my eyes on you, and it's my opinion you ain't no better than circumstances make you. Don't look so scared. I ain't goin' to hurt you. It ain't no concern of mine how you treat thar lad. That's between him and you. If he's got his father's nature, as I reckon he has, he won't let you hold your heel on his neck very long. Take that from me. Now, pard, I came East specially to see you and hev a business talk with you."

"A business talk with me?" gurgled the store-keeper.

"Exactly. I sent you thar deed of thar Lucky Strike Claim and a paper which gave you control of thar property in trust for Wilson's son till he got to be of age. I presume you have them documents in your strong box?"

"I have, but what good are they? You wrote me that the claim was worthless. To make sure on that p'int, I wrote to the postmaster at Poker Flat, the nearest town to Placer Gulch, and asked for information about the property. The reply I got tallied with yours. The claim had promised great things at the start, but the bottom fell out of it and it was classed among the dead ones. However, thinkin' somethin' might turn up some day, I got myself 'pinted guardeen to the boy, and so I stand in the light of a father to him."

"And get all thar work out of him you can for nothin', eh, Sprague?"

"He can't earn more'n his clothes and keep."

"Waal, you asked me what good them documents are? That depends on who has 'em. If you want to stand in with me, them documents 'll be valuable to both of us."

"How so?" asked Sprague, cautiously.

He saw that his visitor was driving at something, and he wanted to find out what it was before he committed himself.

"How old is that thar boy?"

"Eighteen."

"That's what I thought. You'll have control of that property for three years, and you ought

to be able to feather your nest well in that time."

"You speak in riddles, my friend. How kin I feather my nest out of that boy's worthless property?"

"Are you willin' to stand in with me if I show you how?"

"Yes, provided it ain't nothin' agin the law."

"I take it you have thar right to do anythin' with that claim 'cept sell it. As it stands it ain't doin' thar heir no good. It's as dead as a coffin nail. Now, I've been lookin' thar property over in a perffessional way, and I've discovered thar lost lode which George Wilson always believed was hidden somewhar on it."

"Do you mean to say you've found gold again on the property?" cried Sprague, eagerly.

"I have—a mint of it; but that won't do you nor thar heir any good unless you come to terms with me. I am thar only man that knows whar to put his finger on thar quartz. Come in with me and we'll divide even up. What you do with your share are nothin' to me."

"And is the property really rich, after all?"

"Rich! It's thar richest claim in thar West," said Whaley, in a tone that showed he meant what he said.

CHAPTER IV.—After a Square Deal.

Noah Sprague seemed quite dazed by the information. A third person, not in the room, but standing outside the window, which happened to be open, in the dark, was also a bit dazed by the news. This was Jack Wilson, who, having been relieved from duty in the store by the housekeeper so that he could eat his supper, had hastily swallowed the meal and was going back to the store by the outside route, when he overheard his father's name mentioned by the stranger he brought from the station, and, full of curiosity, had paused under the window to listen.

"Did you tell the boy anything about this?" said Sprague, running his tongue across his thin, dry lips.

"I should say not; but if you don't come to time I'll see him on the subject," said Whaley.

"He couldn't do anything without my consent. I'm his guardian," said the postmaster.

"That's why I've made thar proposition to you; but remember, my friend, thar's more than one way of killin' a cat. If you won't stand in with me I'll find a way to get along without you. I've got friends out West that'll help me thar moment I put 'em wise to thar situation. Placer Gulch are some distance in thar wilderness—I told thar boy thar true story of thar place, but I called it Show Down, because he knows his father was at thar Gulch at thar time of his death—and it wouldn't be safe for you nor nobody else to come out thar and try to buck agin me."

"What do you want me to do?"

"You are thar owner protem, as thar sayin' is, of thar Wilson Claim. I want you to give me a three-year contract to work thar property, presumedly in thar boy's interest. With that agreement in my possession, I'll go ahead. Me and my pards 'll start in and work thar claim,

and you'll get a quarter of thar output comes out of thar ground. You won't have to make no accountin' to thar court, 'cause we'll do thar thing in secret, see? I've got a claim next to it. We'll dig a tunnel right through from mine to thar spot whar I've found thar ledge, and we'll take thar gold out through it. I'll give out that I've struck a load in my property and thar gold will be supposed to come from it. See thar p'int?"

The postmaster did, and as the scheme appealed to his avaricious nature, he agreed to stand in with Whaley. Jack, listening to the arrangement outside of the window, wondered why Whaley had taken the trouble to come East and make the crooked deal with his guardian, when he might have gone to work on the plan he outlined and dug out the gold without any one being the wiser that it came from the Wilson Claim. Whaley, however, was a foxy chap. He knew that ultimately such a steal would be discovered, in which event he would be held accountable for his share in it unless he skipped the country. His proposition to Sprague was merely made to throw sand in the store-keeper's eyes, and entice him into an arrangement that would protect him (Whaley), while the postmaster would find himself in a hole if he, as he undoubtedly would, held out his share when making his final report to the court. Whaley had no intention of reporting that the gold came from his own claim, because it could easily be shown that it didn't. The paper, already prepared in advance for Sprague's signature, was a lease of the Wilson Claim to the Whaley Leasing and Mining Co., for the term of three years from date, the expense of operating to be borne by the leasing company, in return for seventy-five per cent. per ton of all ore taken from the aforesaid claim. The arrangement was a liberal one for Whaley, as he intended it to be, and would not have been blindly entered into by any one representing the party of the first part, viz., the lessor, as Sprague was doing. Fortunately for the interest of the heir (Jack Wilson), Whaley overlooked the fact that the document he wanted would not be legal without the permission of the court which had appointed Noah Sprague guardian of the boy. He supposed that, as the claim had been transferred by the original owner to Sprague in trust, that the postmaster could do anything he wanted to with the property except sell it.

But for that, Jack's plucky efforts to secure a square deal would have gone for naught, for a legal lease, if its terms are carried out by the lessee, is incontestable, and though the boy could have forced his faithless guardian to refund his share of the deal, provided it could be recovered, he would have been deprived of a very considerable sum that ought to have been secured to him. Jack, however, knew nothing about the legal aspects of the case. What he did know was that his guardian, through the co-operation of Whaley, was going to try and cheat him out of three years' profit of a claim he had heretofore been ignorant that he was owner of. Being a wide-awake and plucky lad, he was determined to block the scheme at the very start. That he failed to do this at the outset was no fault of his own.

But from that moment he was after a square deal, and he did not dream of the obstacles he would encounter, and the adventures he would meet, before he finally won out, and had proved the stuff he was made of. Whaley produced the lease and Sprague signed it.

"All communications will reach me at Poker Flat, which is the nearest town to Placer Gulch," said the Westerner, folding up the document and placing it in his pocket.

"When shall I hear from yer?" asked the store-keeper.

"I'll write you as soon as I get back."

"You expect to begin gettin' the gold out at once, I suppose?"

"We'll begin operations right away, but it'll be a month before we'll get at thar rock whar thar gold are," said Whaley. "Thar's lots of work to be done first, but when we get started things 'll run right along."

"When do I get the first remittance?"

"You mustn't expect it for some time. The rock has to be got out of thar dump; then it has to be hauled to thar smelter at Poker Flat, then shipped to Denver, all of which 'll take time, 'specially as thar are no reg'lar road to Poker Flat, and until one are built the rock 'll hav to be carried in bags on burros."

"What's a burro?"

"A burro are a small mule."

"You're goin' to stop at the inn for the night?"

"I reckon, unless you've got a spare bed you kin let me have."

"No, no," said the postmaster, hastily. "There's only three bedrooms upstairs, and they're all in use."

"Then p'int out thar way to thar inn, and I'll go thar. You kin send thar boy with me."

"No. He's busy in the store. I'll go with you myself."

"Suit yourself, pard."

Sprague entered the store for his hat, told Jack, who had just slipped in there, to keep an eye on things while he was away, rejoined the Westerner, and the two men, each a rascal in his own way, left the house by the back door and took their way up Main street, the chief thoroughfare of the little seaport town. As the general store was a sort of roosting place for village loungers, who had been accustomed to hanging out there a good part of their lives, Jack had no lack of company, though they didn't bother him at all. During the fall, winter and spring they hugged around the big bellied stove in the center of the store, but as it was on the fringe of summer now, and the days and evenings were warm, the stove was out and the crowd was in possession of the chairs on the narrow, unrailed veranda facing the street. Although only an occasional customer, or somebody after mail, dropped in, Jack had enough to occupy himself, for he had the orders, collected on his afternoon trip, to put up in readiness to take around in the morning.

But on this occasion his thoughts were more than usually busy, as the reader will guess, with the revelation he had overheard a short time before. It was a great surprise for him to learn that his father had owned a mining claim out West, and left it to Noah Sprague in trust for him. That accounted for the post-

master becoming his guardian. His father had not written to him regularly during the latter months of his life, and had not in any one of his letters distinctly said that he owned a mining claim. The boy was unaware that all the letters that came to him from his father had first passed under the inspection of Mr. Sprague, who edited them with a pencil if he thought that proceeding necessary.

The letter in which George Wilson gave his son a full account of his claim, and its original prospects, was held out by the postmaster, and Jack never received it, which accounted for his ignorance on the subject. The deal his guardian had entered into with the stranger from the West was not so surprising to him, for he had no great opinion of Mr. Sprague as a man. A man who was not above giving his customers short weight, and working off all manner of shady tricks on them, when he dared, was, in Jack's opinion, capable of most anything that was mean and cunning. Indeed, if it hadn't been for Jack the general store-keeper would have lost a good part of his trade. The boy was a great favorite in the village, and rather than lose the daily sight of his cheerful face and bright conversation, Sprague's customers put up with many things from him they wouldn't otherwise have done.

Jack intended to block the lease his guardian had entered into if he could. It was entirely against the interests he had suddenly found himself in possession of. The question that agitated him was how far his guardian was authorized to go in the matter. Believing that Mr. Sprague had the legal right to make any lease he saw fit, Jack fell back on the resolution of consulting a lawyer he knew with the view of having the lease held up till its provisions had been investigated. Whether the lease went through or not, Jack felt that the unexpected knowledge he had acquired that evening would prevent his guardian from cheating him out of the money he expected to receive from the working of the claim.

"As soon as the attention of the judge is brought to the fact that I have valuable property interests, he will compel Mr. Sprague to furnish a full report of the claim, and render an accounting of such moneys as are received from it," said Jack to himself. "That will block my guardian's little scheme even if the contract is allowed to stand, which I think is doubtful if it is not fairly drawn."

By the time Sprague got back to the store, Jack had all his orders put up and stowed in the baskets ready to be put on the wagon in the morning. As it was likely that the man from the West would leave by an early train, the boy felt he had no time to lose in taking action. Anyway he would have no time to do anything during the day. The lawyer he intended to consult had an office half a block from the store, but, of course, he was not there at that hour of the evening. The only way to see him right away was to visit him at his home, which was on the other side of the little harbor, in the select residential part of the village. As it was a long walk there, and Mr. Sprague wouldn't allowed him to take the house—nor would he have cared to take the poor animal, which was

tired after a long day's service—he decided to run over to Gossett's shanty on the shore, and get the loan of his boat and the company of his friend Billy. It was only half a mile run across the harbor, and three blocks' walk that way, while it was three miles in a semi-circle by the shortest land route. Accordingly, as soon as Sprague showed up, at half-past eight, Jack put on his hat and said he was going out. As he had his evenings off except Saturday, the postmaster offered no objection, and the boy started for the cove.

CHAPTER V.—The Deserted Craft.

As Jack was a frequent visitor at the cove, Gossett, who was on good terms with him, was not surprised when he walked in at the door. The boatman was reading a newspaper, while Billy Buster was working on a small model of a schooner which he expected to sell for a good price to some summer visitor later on.

"Hello, Jack?" said Gossett.

"How do you do, Gossett," responded the boy, in his customary cheerful tone. "What's the matter with your leg?"

"He slipped between two rocks on the p'int after dark and wrenched it," grinned Billy, who hailed the boatman's affliction as a special act of Providence in his own behalf. "He'll be out of business for a day or two."

"Shut up, you little monkey!" roared Gossett, making a motion to throw the newspaper at the youth. "Wait till I get around ag'in, and I'll warm your legs nicely with a rope's end for laughin' at me."

"Who's laughing at you?" said Billy, suddenly becoming sober.

"You laughed at me when you came home, you young sculpin, and saw the condition I was in. I ain't forgotten it, and I intend to lather you well for it."

"You're always licking me. Why don't you take a rest?" growled Billy.

"I'm takin' a rest now, for which you kin thank your stars."

"But if you intend to lick me when you get on your pins, what good will that do me?"

"You'll be in better condition to stand a good whippin'."

"Shut up! I don't want to hear another word out of you."

"Gossett, I want you to do me a favor," said Jack.

"Name it, and if I kin do it it's yours."

"I want to borrow your boat for a run across the bay on a particular errand which I can't postpone till to-morrow. It will save me a long walk. I want Billy to come with me and stay by the boat while I'm visiting a gentleman on Prospect street."

"I hain't no objection to you takin' the boat, and I'm glad to get rid of that young varmint for a while," said Gossett. "If he was like you he'd be some use to me, but of all the lazy, good-for-nothin', cantankerous imps that ever breathed—"

That's as far as Gossett went, for he became conscious that the two boys had left the hut, and he did not care to talk to the air, though

he often did so when he was riled, or drunk. The boys ran down to the sandy beach of the cove.

"There isn't much wind, Jack, and it looks hazy. I guess a fog is coming in from the ocean," said Billy.

"There's wind enough to take us across and back," said Jack, as they began unmooring the sloop. "It's a straight course across, and even if the fog caught us we couldn't well go astray."

"Who are you going to call on at this hour? It's nearly nine o'clock."

"I'm going to see Mr. Adams, the lawyer."

"Is Mr. Sprague having some legal business done?"

"No. I'm after legal advice myself."

"You are? What for?" asked Billy in surprise, as they put out from the shore.

"You'll learn one of these days, Billy."

"Something must have turned up."

"I'll admit something has turned up."

"Had a scrap with Sprague and want to quit him?"

"I have had no scrap with my guardian, but I wouldn't object to quitting him."

"You don't want to quit him any more than I'd like to cut loose from Gossett. You heard him threaten me with a licking for laughing at his game leg. He always makes good his threats, so that licking is in pickle for me, and I'll get it unless I ran away to-morrow or next day."

"Maybe I could persuade him to forget it."

"You couldn't persuade him to do anything."

"But he let me have this boat, and he allowed you to come with me when I asked him."

"That's different. He ain't happy when he doesn't lay it on me once a day at least. He takes pleasure out of it. He told me so. He said he'd sooner lick me than go to the circus."

"You have a hard time of it, Billy. I wouldn't stand for what you do."

"You're bigger and older than me; but I ain't going to stand it much longer. If I wasn't afraid I might run into worse luck I'd run away to-morrow."

The wind which had been growing lighter ever since they left the cove suddenly gave out altogether, and left the sloop floating idly upon the motionless surface of the harbor. The air had become quite misty around them, so that they could no longer make out the village lights, and it was as thick as pea soup outside the harbor.

"We'll never get across at this rate," said Jack. "I don't want to reach the lawyer's house after he has gone to bed."

"Let's whistle for a breeze," said Billy.

They whistled for a few minutes and then quit. The air remained perfectly calm, but the mist grew thicker every minute. The tide was on the ebb, though the boys didn't know it, and the sloop was drifting out of the harbor. They were not sensible to any motion on the part of the craft. They seemed to be anchored to the spot where the last puff of wind had left them.

"This is a regular ocean fog," said Billy. "They won't be able to see across the street in the village in a little while. You'd have done better to have walked. We are liable to stay right here all night. I hope the tide ain't going out, for if it is we'll go out with it."

"That wouldn't be very nice in this fog."

"I should say not. The swing of the tide

would carry us down the shore a bit, and when it turned we'd drift back on the coast and go ashore, maybe in a bad spot."

Already they were out near the mouth of the harbor, and the fog had become so thick that, close as they sat together, they could hardly see each other.

"Let's crawl under the half deck," said Billy. "What's the good of sitting out here in this clammy air? If a breeze springs up we'll know it right away."

Jack had no objection to seeking the partial protection of the half deck, for he was feeling quite chilly and uncomfortable. Accordingly, they crawled under the deck and lay there talking for an hour, by which time they were a mile off shore and a short distance to the south of the harbor. The calm still held, and Jack knew it was now too late to pay his intended visit to Lawyer Adams. Not a sound was to be heard around them. The death-like silence was painful to them. Jack supposed they were still in the harbor, while Billy had no opinion on the subject. The boys got tired of talking and gradually dozed off to sleep. The calm continued till midnight, and then an offshore breeze sprang up and wafted them further and further from the coast. The breeze was light, but it set the fog in motion, though it did not have much effect on it. Hour after hour passed, and the boys slept on, unmindful of their situation. Suddenly the sloop bumped against something going in the same direction. The shock was slight, but it awoke Jack. A second bump caused him to crawl out from under the half deck.

The fog had thinned out some, and the boy saw the indistinct outline of a vessel broadside on to them. The sloop's mainsail was flattened against the craft, which rode the waves as silent and somber as a funeral ship. Jack felt the breeze and looked around for the boat-hook to fend off with. He couldn't find it, so he routed Billy out from under the half deck.

"We're lying up against some kind of a vessel," he said.

Billy looked and said he guessed they had floated up against one of the two brigs anchored in the harbor of Stormhaven. He was very far from a correct guess, for at that moment they were four miles out in the ocean.

"Where's the boat-hook, Billy? I want to push off this craft."

"Bossett carried it up to the house."

"Then we must push off with our hands. We'll have to go forward, for the sail is in the way."

"There's a breeze blowing, but the fog doesn't seem to be much thinner," said Billy. "We'll never be able to tell the right course to steer."

"I guess I'll go aboard this craft and get the bearings of the shore by the compass."

"How can you tell the way the vessel is lying?"

"If the tide is setting in she's lying down on to the village; if the tide is on the ebb she's lying bow on. If we run away from her at a right angle we are bound to hit the shore near the cove, or the shore we were aiming for when the wind left us becalmed."

"Suppose she's swinging around on the first of either tide, we will either strike the beach

in front of the village or run out toward the mouth of the harbor," said Billy.

"I'm going aboard, anyhow. Here's a rope hanging over the side. After I shin up, grab hold of it and keep the sloop from floating off and leaving me behind."

Jack clambered quickly on board the vessel and jumped down on her fog-enshrouded deck. He heard nothing but the slight creaking of the ropes through the blocks. The sails were set above him, but he couldn't see them. The fog prevented him from distinguishing which was forward and which was aft, so he turned to his right at a venture. He presently came slap up against a wooden wall which he judged was the beginning of the poop where the cabin was. Feeling his way across the deck with one hand on the wall, he came to the door opening into the passage that led to the cabin. It stood open, and he took the liberty of entering. The passage was dark as pitch and filled with fog. He went on till he bumped against the cabin door. He opened it, expecting to find a light in there, swinging under the skylight, but there was none.

He was surprised at this, for he knew it was the custom for the cabin lamp to burn all night, though turned low. He struck a match and found the cabin in a state of great confusion. The stateroom doors were all open, and it wasn't many minutes before he was assured that there was no one in that part of the vessel. She showed every indication of having been hastily abandoned by her officers. As that was a most unusual circumstance, Jack didn't know what to make of it. It was even more unusual in the case of a vessel anchored in the harbor, as he supposed this one was, instead of being nearly six miles off shore, as she really was, and increasing her distance slowly but steadily.

"This is mighty funny," thought the boy, as he looked into the captain's room, and saw the same confusion there.

All the other three rooms wore the same appearance.

"Billy will have to report this to-morrow," said Jack. "I'll call him aboard to look around. Now I'll take a look at the compass."

He ran up the companion stairs, struck a match and held it inside the brass hood of the binnacle. The compass was not there.

"I wonder why they took the compass away? There must have been trouble aboard."

On his way back to the side of the vessel where his companion was holding the sloop he decided to look into the forecabin to see if the crew were gone, too. If the officers were gone he judged the crew was away also. He groped his way forward, reached the scuttle opening into the sailors' quarters, flashed a match down, and shouted, "Ahoy, below!" several times.

He received no reply.

"That settles it. They're gone, all right. The vessel is deserted," he said.

He went to the bulwark and looked down into the fog.

"Hi, there, Billy!" he cried out.

"Hello," replied Billy's voice out of the fog.

"There's no one aboard of this vessel."

"There isn't?" asked Billy, in surprise.

"Not a soul."

"Where are they gone to?"

"How should I know?"

"Did you get your compass bearings?"

"No. The compass is gone. Come aboard and take a look. You'll have to report this in the morning, though it might have already been reported."

"Wait till I tie the sloop to this rope."

Jack waited, and in a few minutes Billy tumbled on board.

"Have you been all over the vessel? In the cabin and forecastle?"

"Yes. Everything is turned topsy-turvy in the cabin and staterooms."

"That's odd, ain't it?"

"That's the way I look at it."

They made their way to the cabin, and Billy saw the condition of things with his own eyes.

"You're more of a sailor than I am. What do you think about it?" asked Jack.

"I give it up. Funny thing to happen in the harbor. As this must have taken place some time ago, it's singular I didn't hear about it. Gossett would have mentioned it if he had heard of trouble aboard this craft. There are only two large vessels in the harbor, both brigs, and this is one of them. There seemed to be nothing wrong with either when I left the wharves around five o'clock," said Billy.

"Well, you see what you see," said Jack, who could find no explanation to offer.

Billy walked around and could find no explanation, either. Finally he suggested that as the fog was so thick, they had better remain on board all night, as he guessed it didn't make a whole lot of difference where they passed the night. Jack agreed, for he had had all the experience he wanted with the fog. So they each turned into one of the bunks and were soon asleep.

When the boys woke up the next morning they were surprised to find themselves and the bark out to sea and land nowhere in sight; also the sailboat they had used was gone from its fastening at the stern of the brig. The boys were in a predicament. Alone on a boat they could not expect to handle! The boat was running away with them. They had to make the best of it, and went on a tour for something to eat, of which the brig's larder furnished them a plentiful store. They ate a bountiful breakfast, and by the time they had finished the morning had slipped away.

During the afternoon the wind freshened, and toward night had turned into a gale, during which the brig tossed about at the mercy of the waves. The boys were frightened out of their senses. Soon a terrible crash came and both topmasts broke off and fell into the sea. A big wave smashed the port bulwarks. During the night the gale lasted, but had blown itself out by the next morning. Both boys had been on watch all night. About 11 o'clock the next morning a British ship sighted them, and saw the predicament of the vessel and lowered a boat which soon was alongside and the mate boarded the brig. After hearing the boys' story, the mate said he would take them to his vessel, which was done, and when all had been explained to the captain he informed them he was on his way to San Francisco, and the only way out of it was

for Jack and Billy to sign as landsmen and go with them. Three months later they were landed in San Francisco.

CHAPTER VI.—From the Coast to Colorado.

The boys put up at the Eureka House, on Commercial street, a cheap lodging house to which they had been directed.

"We're back in the United States at last, but a long way from Stormhaven," said Billy. "The question is what are we going to do? We haven't money enough to pay our way back, which I'm not aching to do. I wouldn't face Gossett, after being concerned in the loss of his sloop, for a bunch of money. He'd murder me right off the reel. Now that I've got away from him, I don't want to see him again. I guess I can make my own living all right. As for you, Jack, I don't see why you should care to return to Sprague's store. You can do a whole lot better on your own hook. Both Sprague and Gossett have given us up long before this."

"I made up my mind long ago aboard the Middlesex what I was going to do when we reached this place," said Jack. "You will do what suits you best, Billy, but I'm going to start at once for the mining districts of Colorado."

"What put that plan in your head? I never heard you say that you had a hankering to go mining."

"I haven't in the ordinary sense, but as I happen to own a claim at an out-of-the-way place called Placer Gluch, somewhere around Poker Flat, Colorado, I intend to go there and look after it. If you will go with me I will see that you don't regret it."

"You own a mining claim in Colorado!" cried Billy, in surprise. "This is the first time you let the fact out to me. Did your father leave it to you when he died?"

"He left it to Noah Sprague in trust for me, but Mr. Sprague kept the knowledge of it from me, and I only found it out an hour or so before I borrowed the sloop from Gossett and we started across the harbor of Stormhaven on the trip that ended in the middle of the Atlantic, and led to our coming here."

"You don't say so."

"I told you at the time that I was going over to see Lawyer Adams. I wanted to consult him about that claim. You remember the Westerner I brought from the railroad station to the store that night?"

"Yes."

"I found out that he was my father's partner in the West."

"Is that so?"

"Yes. Do you remember the story he told us about the mining camp, which he called Show Down, and which suddenly boomed into a town in a week owing to the discovery made by the Chinaman who fell through the ground while digging a ditch about his hut, and which town went to pot as soon as the gold in the claim petered out?"

"Sure, I remember it."

"Well, that place wasn't Show Down, it was Placer Gulch. The claim where the Chinaman

made the discovery of gold was my father's, and is mine now."

"Gosh!"

"The Westerner came to Stormhaven, not because I was living there and he felt an interest in me, but to secure a three years' lease of my claim from Mr. Sprague."

"What did he want with the lease?"

"To work the property. He told my guardian that he had made a fresh discovery of gold in it, and his proposition was to divide the gold he mined with Mr. Sprague, keeping three-quarters of it himself, without reference to me, to whom it belongs. Sprague agreed and signed the lease, and it was to find out if such a lease was legal that I started to call on Lawyer Adams that night."

"If Sprague had no right to make the lease, it wasn't legal."

"I don't know whether he had the right to make it or not, but as it wasn't in my interest I intended to have it investigated. I failed, however, owing to our going astray in the fog. The Westerner has the lease and is probably working my claim by this time."

"You're going to your claim to stop him?"

"I am after a square deal. I am the owner of the property, and I want to be recognized and get my rights. Mr. Sprague expects to keep the quarter share of the proceeds he receives from the Westerner during the three years the lease has to run. I don't intend that he shall keep it, for it belongs to me. Furthermore, I don't consider a quarter of the output a fair deal. I propose to find out from practical mining men what the owner of a mining property should receive as his share when he leases his claim to be worked by an outsider. Probably that will depend on circumstances, and what the lessee is willing to offer, but as the Westerner told my guardian that my claim was the richest in the West—meaning, of course, one of the richest, in his opinion—I think my rake-off ought to be about two-fifths. At any rate, if the claim is rich, competition for a lease of it ought to be invited in justice to me, and the lease be awarded to the highest bidder. Mr. Sprague's way of doing business shows him to be an unworthy guardian, and I guess I could have somebody else appointed in his place—somebody who would give me a square deal, which I never can expect of Mr. Sprague."

"Well, if you have decided to go to Colorado, I'm ready to go with you. I had rather go with you than stay here without you."

The boys spent three days in San Francisco, and then started East by rail. They bought a second-class ticket as far as Leadville, which used up nearly all their money. On their arrival at Leadville they made inquiries as to how they would get to Poker Flat. They learned they could go by rail to a town called Keystone, which was the terminus of a short branch road. From there a stage would take them through the mountains to Poker Flat. The cost of this trip, though not a long one, they found was far beyond their means, and as they would need money to pay their way after they reached Poker Flat, they decided they must look up some work in Leadville to provide the needed funds. It was not hard for a smart boy, able and will-

ing to hustle, to get a job in Leadville at better pay than he could have obtained in one of the big cities.

Jack and Bill looked up the advertisements in one of the dailies and caught on right away. They remained a month in Leadville, saving every cent they could. Even at that, the cost of living being high, they made headway but slowly. One evening when the boys came together after their day's work, Billy said:

"Are you ready to make a start for Poker Flat, Jack?"

"Hardly. We haven't money enough yet."

"How much are we shy?" said Billy, for Jack acted as treasurer of their combined resources.

"We ought to have at least \$30 more."

"Here's five \$20 gold-pieces I picked up in a little purse on the street. That will fill the bill. We'll quit our jobs at the end of the week and go on to Poker Flat."

Jack welcomed this piece of good luck gladly, for he was impatient to learn what was being done on his claim, and to secure the square deal he was after. On the following Sunday morning they took a train for Keystone, and reached that town in about an hour and a half. It was a small place, not worthy of the dignity of being called a town, but the boys found that it was the custom to call nearly every place connected by rail a town, while other places six times as large, in the mining districts, were known as camps. Poker Flat was considered a camp, although it had become a bustling town, with nearly all the modern improvements. All the stores, saloons, hotels, offices, and many dwellings were lighted by electricity, furnished with running water, and up-to-date plumbing, and yet, as the boys viewed it from the stage-coach that afternoon when the vehicle issued from the depths of a wild gorge, through which a good road had been built all the way from Keystone, it looked like a town lost in the wilds. It was just as if some miners in the depths of the wilderness, possessed of an Aladdin's lamp, had rubbed it and said: "Let there be a real town here," and forthwith the town appeared on the slope.

Poker Flat grew out of a gold strike, just as Placer Gulch had threatened to initiate its example. A power house was erected, a forty stamp mill went up along with a hotel, stores, post-office, and many other buildings, including an electric light plant, telephone building, water works, etc. From that nucleus it rapidly expanded to its present bustling proportions. The surrounding mountains were honeycombed with tunnels, and the narrow valley with buildings marking the hoisting works over the mouths of shaft holes. The shaft of a mine is a large well, divided by heavy planking into two or three compartments, extending from the top to within two or three feet of the bottom. The cold air from above rushes down one compartment, and the heated and impure air up another, thus creating a circulation at the bottom of the shaft, and so enabling the miners to work in the tunnels and galleries below.

The first thing Jack did was to call on a lawyer and consult him concerning mine leases in general, and his own in particular. As to the lease of his own claim the lawyer would

venture no opinion. He said the lease had probably been made out and executed in proper shape. Its legality would depend wholly on his guardian's power to make the lease, not on whether it was a perfectly fair one.

"If your guardian has the legal right to lease the property in question, according to his own judgment, and without being obliged to submit the paper to the concurrence of the court which appointed him your guardian, then the lease will stand in law, even if given a mere nominal consideration," said the lawyer. "According to your statement the claim did not come to you by will, but by a deed of gift made out in trust for you to the man who got himself appointed your guardian. While it is a fact that you being next of kin, and therefore heir-at-law, would have come into the claim anyway, the deed of gift may make some difference in the case, according as it is worded. That is, it may give an unlimited power to your guardian, which he wouldn't otherwise possess. So you see that no lawyer, without being able to see all the documents in the case, can give a definite opinion as to the legality of the lease under the terms of which the lessee asserts his right to work the claim during the term of the lease."

Jack was disappointed, for it was impossible for him to produce the document that would definitely settle the matter either to his satisfaction or otherwise.

CHAPTER VII.—At Placer Gulch.

When Jack returned to the miners' hotel where he and Billy were stopping, he told his companion about the unsatisfactory condition of things as outlined by the lawyer.

"What will you do now?" inquired Billy.

"I'm going to Placer Gulch and have a talk with the Westerner," answered Jack.

"If he has got hold of a good thing he won't make any change that will benefit you. As you're under Sprague's control until you're of age, I don't see what you can do."

"Are you willing to go to Placer Gulch with me, or had you rather stay here and pick up a job?"

"I'll go anywhere you want me to?"

"All right. We'll start to-morrow morning. I must find out the way, for there is no road, nothing but a rough trail. As there is no public conveyance going there, we'll have to walk unless we can hire a couple of horses without being obliged to put up a deposit equal to their value."

Jack consulted with the proprietor of the hotel.

"I'm the owner of a claim in Placer Gulch, left me by my father. My father's partner was East to the village where I was living, and he told my guardian that he had made a rich strike on the claim which would pan out equal to any mine in this part of the State. My friend and I are on our way there, but our funds are low and we can't afford to buy horses to take us there. Can we hire them until we get back?"

"I'll get you a couple of cayuses if you'll put up \$10 apiece for them," said the landlord.

Jack agreed to do that.

"How far is Placer Gulch from here?" he asked.

"About eighteen miles."

"We'll have to carry a supply of provisions, I guess?"

"You won't find none there, I reckon. The Cayuses will be provided with a pair of saddle bags large enough to hold a couple of weeks' supply of food and drink. There's a store up the street that'll fit you with all you want."

Jack produced \$20, and the landlord promised to have the cayuses ready for them next morning. The boys, furnished with a note from the proprietor of the hotel, called at the supply store, picked out what they figured they would need in the way of grub, paid for it, and said they would call for it on the following morning. At nine o'clock the next day the boys rode out of Poker Flat and took the trail up through the mountains for Placer Gulch. It was the first week in November and the weather was fine but cool. They each had a pair of blankets strapped on behind the saddle, for they could expect no hotel accommodations where they were going. They would find a score or more of vacant, finished and partly finished buildings where they could roost without cost or question. Jack had learned very little about the operations of the Westerner who had secured the lease of his claim. About all he found out was that a well-known miner and prospector named Jim Whaley had gone to Placer Gulch three months since with several companions, and that they had carried with them hand drills and others mining tools.

Two of them had returned at the end of thirty days for a supply of provisions, and reported that they had found some gold on the claim they were working, but not enough to set the woods on fire. They showed no samples of ore, and did not talk like men who had made a strike. The party had carried 100 ore bags with them, and the two men bought 100 more and took them with them. This was the only significant feature of their visit to Poker Flat. It started two prospecting miners for the Gulch, but they came back at the end of the week and said the Whaley party were taking out very little ore for the work they were putting in on the claim. Nobody else went to the Gulch, and nothing had since been heard from there. In the face of the fact that the Westerner had told Postmaster Sprague that the claim in question was the richest in the West, Jack was surprised that better results were not coming out of the ground. He and Billy talked the matter over and came to the conclusion that the Whaley party were perhaps keeping the true condition of affairs a secret to prevent a second rush of gold seekers away from the Gulch.

How such a rush could interfere in any way with the Whaley party was not clear to the boys. Possibly Whaley had some other reason for keeping things quiet. Judging from what he had overheard of the interview between the man and Sprague, Jack sized Whaley up as a foxy and not-to-be-depended-on individual. The route to Placer Gulch was clear enough, but for all that it was not until some time after dark that the boys got there. Evening had come on while they were still a mile or two away, with a

"All right. I'll call," saying through the trees. In a few minutes they left Poker Flat, had breakfast, which, with the background of mountain scenery, made the aspect of things very dark. The boys stopped in a ravine to eat supper, and passed over the last lap at a slow rate. The first idea they got that they were drawing near their destination was a bright light ahead, thrown by a reflecting lantern.

Then they opened up other lights shining from some building. In a few minutes they came to two unfinished buildings close on the trail which had now widened out into a rough roadway twenty-five to thirty feet wide. They saw the dark outlines of other shacks on the opposite side. Jack reined in, dismounted and tried the door of one of them. It was not fastened, and he walked in and struck a match. The place was furnished with chairs, several tables and a bar. The rear room was fitted up as a kitchen, and pots and pans still hung near the stove, but most of them were thick with dirt and rust, and were useless.

The stove was rusty and choked with ashes and refuse. There was an entry that occupied half the width of the building between the kitchen and the front room, and decreased the size of the former room to that extent. Here a flight of rough stairs led to the floor above. Jack went up there and found three small rooms, each furnished with a cot and bedclothes, and hooks on which to hang garments, as well as cheap, galvanized iron washstands, with pitcher and bowl of similar material, and one large room extending to the front fitted with a dozen cots, each supplied with a pair of army blankets. Jack jumped to the conclusion that this was the hotel, the proprietor of which had expected to do a rushing business as the diggings expanded. The boy returned to the road.

"We'll put up here for the night, and probably till further notice," he said to his companion.

"All right," replied Billy. "Where shall we stow the cayuses?"

"We'll find a place in the back, I guess."

They found nothing but a vacant space, covered with grass and trees, through which ran a stream of water perhaps a foot deep and six wide. They tied the animals to a pair of trees with a long line, took off their blankets and saddle bags, and entered the house through the kitchen door.

"There are cots upstairs," said Jack. "We can have a room each. We'll carry our stuff up there."

This they did. After inspecting the mattresses on two of the cots, and finding that the blankets were not in bad shape after being idle for two years, they arranged their own blankets on top and were satisfied with their beds. They were tired enough to turn in right away. Jack advised Bill to do so, but as for himself, he said he was going to make a short inspection of the diggings. He left the building, after taking note of its general appearance, and walked up the road toward the lights. He passed more than a score of buildings, mostly on one side of the road—all dark, silent and deserted, like a village of the dead. The building where the lights shone from the windows was at the upper end of the road or street, close to the foot of the moun-

tain spur. The light with the reflector was about three hundred yards up the mountain side, and even at that distance in the darkness Jack could see the forms of men there moving about as if at work. The boy peered into the lighted house through one of the windows and saw one man there smoking and cleaning a revolver. The room was furnished with a long table, set out with plates, cups, etc., a dozen or more chairs, and other articles. It was evidently the living room of the Whaley party. The rest of the house was dark, and Jack could not make out what was in the rear, but judged it was the kitchen. Then he took his way toward the light up the mountain. As he approached nearer, the forms of the men became clearer.

He saw a hoisting apparatus under a roof supported on a dozen posts. It consisted of a hand windlass, from which a stout rope ran through a pulley hanging from the roof down into the shaft. When Jack got quite close he saw a small iron bucket pulled up full of ore. This was swung over to a bag, the mouth of which another man held open so the contents of the bucket could be poured in. When the bag was full, the mouth was sewed up with a large needle and a piece of yarn. The bag was then added to a pile of similar ones close by.

"Nine o'clock. Time to quit," said one of the pair at the mouth of the shaft.

He sang down the mouth of the hole. The bucket was lowered, both men got hold of the handle of the windlass, and one of the miners below was hoisted up. Then a second, third and fourth was pulled up, and as the last one stood in the glare of the light, Jack recognized him as Jim Whaley.

CHAPTER VIII.—Jack Meets Jim Whaley.

The light was put out and the men started for the occupied house.

"We've got one hundred and sixty bags full," Jack heard one of the men say.

"Then it is time we started the ore to the smelter," said Whaley. "But we'll only send one wagon load to begin with. We've been here three months, and that won't look like a whole lot for the time we've put in. You take the load in, Bill, and fetch 200 empty bags back with you, together with the supplies we need."

That's all Jack heard as they passed out of his hearing, but it was enough to convince him that the claim was panning out pretty well, considering the few hands at work. The most effective tools the men were using were a couple of hand drills, and as the tunnel they were working in, a short distance below the surface, was small, as yet they were not getting on very fast. The reason Whaley was using hand tools was because he was pressed for cash, and he could not afford to install more up-to-date methods until he had realized on the initial output. Besides, the bunch wanted to work the claim as long as possible on the quiet. The real reason for this was that Whaley could not tell how the lode he had discovered ran.

At present it pointed directly into the mountain, but it was liable to branch off to the right or left into claims taken up by others who had

abandoned them when the Lucky Strike gave out and George Wilson failed to find gold again. The owners of these adjoining claims Whaley had been unable to find, but he did not doubt that the report of a fresh gold strike in the Gulch would reach their ears and bring them back to see what was doing. Jack remained where he was until the men entered the house, then he walked up to the shaft, struck a match and counted the bags of ore piled about. There were sixty of them. Where the other hundred were he could not say, probably stowed in one of the empty houses. Curious to see the place where the ore was being taken out, he lowered the bucket till it struck the bottom, fifteen feet below. Relocking the windlass, he grabbed the rope and slid down. Striking a match, he saw the mouth of the tunnel, and entered it. It had been opened up about twenty feet. He saw the two hand drills, the shovels and picks, with hammers and hand borers.

A small pile of ore lay on the ground. Jack examined samples of it, and he could see the dull yellow streaks in the white quartz. Although he had very little knowledge of gold or silver ore, he could see that the rock appeared to be rich in the precious metal. It made him mad to think that all this was his property, and yet was at the mercy of a bunch of strangers, who probably stood to make a fortune at his expense. In less than three years they might clean the claim out, and leave him nothing but an unprofitable piece of ground. Indeed, there was more fact than fiction in this reflection.

The purpose of the lessee, of course, is to make as much out of the claim within a given time as he can. Some lessees make a good thing out of their lease, while others are not so fortunate. Whaley figured on making a mint out of Jack's claim, and he had time enough to thoroughly explore the property and secure the cream, if not the milk as well. Jack put a number of the best samples in his pocket, then he climbed back to the surface, wound the bucket up, and started for the building where he and Billy had put up. He passed the lighted building and stopped to look in. Whaley and his working force were eating their supper, waited on by the man Jack had seen cleaning the revolver. Ten minutes later Jack reached the deserted "hotel" and found Billy asleep. He turned in himself, but tired though he was, it was some time before he became oblivious of his surroundings.

He was still sleeping when Billy turned out.

A clear, sunshiny day greeted him. The cayuses were wandering around as far as their lines allowed them, nibbling the grass. The deserted camp was now plainly to be made out in its entirety. The only bit of life in sight was that connected with the Whaley shack, where the men were taking a smoke after their breakfast preparatory to returning to the mine to put in another day. A wagon with four cayuses was standing up the mountain side where Bill Scott and two companions were loading the vehicle with bags of ore. Bill inspected the Gulch from the windows, and had taken in about everything in sight by the time Jack woke up. Then the boys sat down to breakfast, and while they were

eating they heard Scott shouting to his team of ~~and~~ from here?" he wagon passed the "hotel" on its way to ~~the~~ Flat. Jack told Billy what he had seen the night before.

"I went down the shaft and into the tunnel and saw what they were doing there," he said. "Here are some of the quartz specimens, and they look to be rich with gold. See the yellow streaks and bits of metal all through them?"

Billy said the samples were all to the good. "They've taken out 160 bags of that stuff. If each bag weighs about 200 pounds, as I judge it does, that makes 32,000 pounds, or sixteen tons. If it assays \$300 a ton, and Whaley claimed it would do better, they'll get \$5,000 out of what they have already taken out. A quarter of that, or \$1,250, goes to my guardian, and the Whaley bunch keep the rest. Even if Mr. Sprague intended to do the right thing by me, which he doesn't, would you consider I was getting a fair rake-off?"

"No. You ought to get a third, at least, for you own the claim. If you worked it yourself you could make more than Whaley. If it was my claim I'd want to boss the job and get all the profit."

"That's the way I look at it. How much gold will be left in that claim after Whaley has worked it for three years?"

"Maybe none."

"That's just it. Now, to put the thing in a fair light, if Whaley discovered the lost vein, as he claims, and which I'm willing to allow, he is entitled to something for that. I'm willing to let him work the claim say, for a year, on a two-thirds whack, or eighteen months on a three-fifths rake-off, he paying all expenses. I think that is a square deal all around."

"I think so, too."

"You're going to call on Whaley and put the matter up to him?"

"Yes. We'll go to the claim right away."

"He won't be pleased to see you, I'll bet."

"I can't help that. This is my property, and I have the right to come and see it, and also the right to demand a square deal."

The boys took a look at their cayuses and, finding they were all right, they started up the street. As they passed the inhabited house they saw no one there, but they heard the rattling of dishes in the rear, which indicated that the cook and general helper was cleaning up after breakfast. They were seen as they drew near the claim by the men busy on the surface. They walked right up to the roof on stilts.

"Hello," said one of the men, "where did you two spring from?"

"The last place was Poker Flat," replied Jack.

"What put it into your head to come here? There's nothing doing in the Gulch except on this claim."

"We are aware of that."

"What did you come for, then? Looking for work!"

"No. I came to see Jim Whaley, who, I believe, is bossing this work."

"Oh, you know Whaley, do you? Want to see him right away? He's down in the tunnel."

"Yes."

"All right. I'll call him up."

In a few minutes the Westerner was hauled up.

"How do you do, Mr. Whaley? You remember me, don't you?" said Jack.

"Jack Wilson!" cried Whaley, after a swift recognition.

CHAPTER IX.—Jack Opens His Fight For A Square Deal.

"What brought you out here, and how did you get here?" said Whaley, regarding Jack curiously, and in not over friendly a way.

"I came here on business, and how I got here is a long and curious story," replied Jack.

"Waal, you and a friend of yours, this chap who's with you, I reckon, suddenly disappeared from Stormhaven thar night I came thar. You borrowed a sailboat from thar man your friend was apprenticed to, and you two went off sailin' after dark in a dense fog, and no one know'd whar you was headed for. I stayed in thar village several days, and durin' that time you warn't heard from. Jest afore I left thar place your guardeen, who was much cut up over your disappearance, told me that thar boat you chaps went sailin' in was picked up at sea, with thar sail set and no one in her, by a schooner from Boston to Stormhaven. It was brought in and claimed by thar owner. That seemed to establish thar fact that you two had fallen overboard and got lost. At any rate, thar Stormhaven paper printed a story to that effect, and your guardeen gave you up as a dead one. Now here you turn up with your friend, alive and hearty, and away out here in thar wilderness. I reckon an explanation of your conduct are in order," and Whaley frowned.

"I don't know that you have any right to demand an explanation from me, Mr. Whaley, but seeing that we became acquainted in a free-and-easy way in Stormhaven, I have no objection telling you how I and my friend, Billy Buster, disappeared from the village. I borrowed the boat to call on a friend on the other side of the harbor, and I took Billy with me. We never reached the other side. Had the wind held we'd have got across and back in spite of the fog, but it failed us when we were half way, and we ran up against one of the two brigs lying at anchor, as we supposed, in the harbor. We went aboard and found her deserted by her officers and crew, and everything in confusion. We didn't know what to make of it, but decided, on account of the fog, to stay aboard all night. When we woke up in the morning we found ourselves miles out at sea, and Gossett's sailboat gone. As the two of us couldn't sail the brig, which had her sails up, and was traveling out to sea at a fair gait, we had to let things take their course and hope for rescue by some vessel that sighted us. None did that day. Then a gale came on and nearly sent us to the bottom. I suppose we would have gone there only we were taken off by a British ship bound for San Francisco. As there was no chance of our getting back to Stormhaven, we were forced to work our way around the Horn, and five weeks ago we were landed at the Gilden Gate. We started

East at once, as far as our money would carry us, which was Leadville. From there we came here. Now you have our story in a nutshell."

"Waal, that puts a diff'rent complexion on thar situation, I'll allow; but what brought you here from Leadville? Why didn't you two work your way back to Stormhaven, whar you belong?"

"Leadville is in Colorado."

"I reckon it ain't nowhar else."

"My father came to Colorado and spent a considerable time in the mining districts."

"Waal?"

"The last few letters I got from him he mailed from Poker Flat."

"Waal?" said Whaley, the frown returning to his face.

"In those letters he told me he was prospecting at a place called Placer Gulch. Then one day Mr. Sprague told me he had just received word of my father's death—that he had died and was buried in the Gulch. But you know all about that, for you were with father when he died, and it was you who notified Mr. Sprague of the fact and sent him certain papers which showed that my father owned a mining claim in the Gulch, which, finding he was about to die, he transferred to Mr. Sprague, in trust for me. Through that paper the postmaster had himself appointed my guardian."

"So Sprague told you all that, did he? Why, he told me that——"

The Westerner stopped abruptly and looked hard at the boy.

"No, he didn't tell me," went on Jack. "He told me my father died worth nothing, and that I was now wholly dependent on him for my support. He said he could not afford to keep me unless I was willing to work in the store for my board and clothes. There was nothing for me to do but agree, particularly as I had been helping around the store, when I wasn't at school, almost all the time since my father left me in his care."

"Waal, if he didn't tell you, how did you find out that your father owned a claim in the Gulch?"

"You remember that on the night I drove you in the wagon from the station to the store you told Billy and me the story of the rise, in a night, so to speak, of a mining camp which you called Show Down?"

"Waal, what about it?" growled Whaley.

"Why didn't you call the place by its right name?"

"What d'ye mean?"

"The camp you called Show Down was this place—Placer Gulch."

"How d'ye know it was?"

"I heard you tell Mr. Sprague so."

"You heard me tell Mr. Sprague?"

"In the little sitting-room behind the store. In fact, I overheard the whole of that interview."

"You did?"

"I did. I was standing outside the window. The reason I stopped to listen was because I heard you mention my father's name, and I naturally wanted to learn what you knew about my father. You had come from Colorado, and I was interested. So I listened and heard everything that passed between you and Mr. Sprague. You told him that you had discovered gold on

my father's claim, which was supposed to be worthless, since the first strike petered out before my father died. Mr. Sprague asked you if it was valuable and your words were that it was 'the richest claim in the West.'"

Whaley uttered a smothered imprecation.

"You told the postmaster that the business which had brought you to Stormhaven was to get from him a lease of the claim so you could work it. To get him to sign the paper which you had brought with you, you suggested that he could keep his share of the transaction, make no report to the court, and thus cheat me, the heir to the claim, out of what rightfully belonged to me."

"Look here, young man, you're makin' a charge agin me, d'ye understand?"

"I do, for it's the truth," said Jack, sturdily.

"It ain't thar truth. It are a lie!" said Whaley, fiercely.

"I've heard that to call a man a liar out here is dangerous. As I'm only a boy, you think I can't resent it. I want you to take that word back, at once, do you understand?" and Jack looked the man squarely in the eye.

"Why, confound your nerve, do you think——"

"That's enough, Mr. Whaley. You'll take it back or I'll brand you as a coward. I'm a boy, and unarmed; you're a man, and I see the butt of a gun in your hip pocket. You have all the advantage of me. If you are a real man you will apologize. You are a Westerner, and when they are not born rascals, I have been told they are fair and square, so I put it up to you."

Whaley was clearly disconcerted.

"Waal, I'll take back thar word, but I deny your allegation."

"All right. We won't argue the matter. I can't prove it, so we'll let it go. Mr. Sprague signed the lease, and he expects to skin me out of what should come to me through the lease, but I going to see that he doesn't."

Whaley grinned.

"I s'pose that's why you came here; but you've had your trouble for nothin'. I've got nothin' to do with what your guardeen does with thar share thar lease entitles him to. You'll have to fight it out with him."

"I intend to."

"Seein' that you're plucky and smart like your father, I guess you'll win."

"I expect to. But I didn't come here on that errand. Why should I when Mr. Sprague is in Stormhaven, 2,000 miles or more from here?"

"When you reached Leadville and found that Poker Flat warn't such a great way off, and that ther Gulch was near it, you thought you'd come and hev a look at your claim, is that it?"

"That was a part of my reason for coming here."

"What other reason have you? Want to see whar your father are buried?"

"Yes, that was another reason."

"Waal, I'll show you his grave. It's thar only one hereabouts. If thar town hadn't gone up I reckon we should hev had a respectable graveyard by this time. Thar diggin's has a tendency to cause people to die with thar boots on."

Whaley grinned again and chuckled.

"I had another reason for coming here," said Jack.

"What are it?"

"I wanted to talk to you about that lease you induced Mr. Sprague to sign."

"Want to see it? Come over to thar house and I'll show it to you."

Jack accompanied the man, and Billy brought up in the rear.

"Is the claim as rich as you told my guardian it was?" said Jack.

"It are fairly good," replied Whaley.

"What do you call fairly good? You have taken out quite a bit of rock. How does it assay?"

"I ain't had none of it assayed."

Jack believed that statement was false, but he had to take the man's word.

"I thought that was the first thing that was done in order to establish some kind of idea as to the value of the gold in sight?"

"You are right. The first samples I took out afore I went East I had assayed, and they showed about \$300 to thar ton. That's why I said it was thar richest claim in thar West, meanin' it was pretty rich."

"You've been working the claim three months."

"Who told you that?"

"I heard in Poker Flat that you left there for this place three months ago, with mining tools, supplies and other things."

"That are right. We've been workin' about eleven weeks. It was three weeks afore we got to workin' on thar vein."

"How many tons of rock have you taken out?" asked Jack, wishing to see what answer Whaley would give him.

"Not many."

"Fifteen or twenty?"

"No. You seen what we had bagged at thar shaft."

"But you sent a load of it to Poker Flat this morning."

"I forgot that. We'll call it sixty bags altogether. Six ton."

"That's all you've taken out in eleven weeks?"

"I reckon."

"And what do you think that will pan out?"

"Maybe \$2,500."

They had reached the house by that time and they walked in. The man who acted that week as housekeeper was in the kitchen at work. Whaley led the way upstairs. Bill remained behind and sat down in one of the chairs on the porch. Whaley took Jack to his room—a small, rough, unfinished apartment. Taking a tin box from the shelf over the head of the cot, he unlocked it and produced the lease.

"Thar you are. Look over it. A lawyer drew it up for me, and it are signed and sealed in regular form."

Jack went over it rapidly.

"Do you call that a fair lease?" he asked, handing it back.

"What's thar matter with it?"

"You take three-quarters of the output and allow Sprague only one quarter."

"Waal, I do thar work and foot all the expenses, don't I?"

"Yes."

"Sprague has nothin' to do but to take his quarter when it's ready for him."

"Suppose you take out rock that pans out \$10,000 a month——"

"It ain't likely."

"Suppose you do."

"Waal, suppose I do, what then?"

"Sprague is supposed to get only \$2,500, while you get \$7,500. It isn't a fair proportion."

"Why ain't it when I pay for everythin'?"

"I'll tell you why it isn't," said Jack, who then stated what he had learned from miners in Poker Flat was the average percentage allowed to the lessee on a lease which turned out \$10,000 a month and upward.

"Whaley glared at the boy. The lad knew more about the matter than he supposed he did."

"Waal, this here lease ain't as good as I thought it was—at least, not yet. It may do better after a while when we get to workin' right on thar claim."

"I've got some of the samples of the ore you are taking out now, and I call them rich. I intend to have them passed upon by an assayer."

"What good will that do you?"

"It will give me a line on the present output of the claim."

"Waal, s'pose it does. What diff'rence will it make to you?"

"I shall use the information to break the lease and have you make a new one running not over eighteen months."

"Sonny, you make me laugh," grinned Whaley.

"Do I? All right. He laughs best who laughs last. You think that lease is legal?"

"I certainly do."

"Well, show me the signature of the judge of the court who appointed Sprague my guardian, approving the lease."

It was only a bluff on Jack's part, but it startled Whaley.

Whaley acknowledged the lease had no judge's signature.

"Then Sprague will find himself in a hole," said Jack. "I intended to inform the judge at Stormhaven of this, and he will undoubtedly declare the lease void. Then I will advertise for offers to work the claim, after the case is tried out in this county somewhere, and the highest bidder will get the lease."

This scared Whaley, and he resolved to temporize with Jack until he had seen a lawyer. If things went against him he resolved to do away with the boy in some manner. He did not intend to kill him, however, but have him incarcerated in a cave in the mountain which he knew. He knew his men would stand by him and give him all the help he needed in the matter.

Jack joined Billy and told him what had transpired between Whaley and himself. While Billy and Jack were talking, Whaley and his men were holding a consultation. When it broke up Whaley sent a man over to Jack to tell him Whaley wanted to see him. Jack accompanied the man over to the shaft where Whaley was, and when he arrived there he was seized from behind, bound and gagged and carried toward the mountain. Coming to a dark hole or cave, they were about to enter with their burden when a bearded stranger appeared at the opening and said:

"Stop where you are!" and menaced them with a revolver.

CHAPTER X.—The Unknown.

"Who in thunder are you and what are you doing here?" demanded the fellow in charge of the proceedings.

"Drop that boy!" was the reply from the bearded man.

The other's hand glided swiftly to his hip pocket, and his revolver was half way out when the stranger's gun flashed a streak of fire. The man uttered a cry of pain as his arm dropped to his side, broken by the bullet.

"Now then, drop that boy or I'll drop you!" said the stranger in a tone that indicated he would stand no nonsense.

The two who were carrying Jack had no alternative but to obey.

"Turn around and face the entrance to the defile," said the stranger. "Throw up your arms."

The pair did so. The other man was holding his arm up and glaring at the unknown, his face convulsed with pain.

"Step up alongside your friends," said the stranger to him.

"Blame you, you've broken my arm!" said the rascal, as he did as he was told.

"That's your own fault. You should not have tried to draw your gun on me. You should count yourself lucky that I did not kill you," said the unknown, taking possession of the fellow's weapon.

He then hauled the revolvers out of the pockets of the other two.

"Now you can go. March straight ahead down the defile. Start!"

They started and were soon lost to view. The stranger whipped out a knife and freed Jack from his bonds and removed the gag.

"I thank you, sir, for having me from those rascals," said the boy, gratefully.

"You are welcome, my boy," replied the unknown, in a mellow voice. "Pick up those weapons and follow me."

Jack shoved a gun in his hip pocket and, carrying the other two in his hands, accompanied the stranger into the dark mountain cave. The transition from the light outside to the gloom of the cave prevented the boy from making out even the outlines of the place. Everything was black to his eyes, and he could not see the tall, stalwart form of his rescuer who was preceding him, but guided by his voice he followed unhesitatingly, and presently realized that he was treading a narrow, rocky passage. This ended at a second cave, by which time Jack's eyes were growing a bit used to the darkness, and he could just distinguish the stranger's head. Another short passage brought them to a third cave, smaller than the other two. The unknown seized him by the arm and led him around a spur of rock into a tortuous passage which extended for some distance and ended in a fourth cave of large dimensions, the floor of which was very uneven. Here the stranger produced a taper which he lighted.

"We are about to crawl up the face of the wall by a series of rough steps. Shove those weapons into your pockets and feel your way carefully," he said.

Up went the unknown from the confidence of a person accustomed to the route. Jack followed in a groping fashion, feeling for a foothold. They landed on a narrow shelf, and the boy saw a rope hanging through a hole overhead.

"This rope will take us to a lighter cavern above which is inaccessible by any other route than this," said the stranger. "I will go up first. As soon as the rope ceases to shake tie the end of it under your arms loosely. As I pull on the rope you can assist yourself by placing your feet on the projections here and there. Take this taper. It will light your way."

Thus speaking, the unknown caught hold of the rope and hoisted himself hand-over-hand until he reached the first projecting stone high above the shelf, after which his progress was easier. When the rope ceased to shake in Jack's hand he tied the end of it around under his arms as he had been directed.

"Are you ready?" came a voice from somewhere above.

"Yes," the boy shouted back.

The rope tightened and he rose slowly in the air. After reaching the first projection it was like climbing a pair of parallel ladders closely hugging a smooth wall, which any one knows is a difficult job without support. Helped by the rope, Jack found the ascent easy enough, and emerged through the mouth of the hole into a large cavern, lighted by an irregular opening beginning four feet above the floor. The sunlight, shining in, dazzled his eyes, which had become accustomed to the darkness of the caves and passages below. He soon got used to the light, however, and looked curiously about the place. It was evidently the home of the unknown, for a couch of dried grass lay at one side, on which was a pair of blankets. A pair of saddle bags stood at the head of this bed. A quantity of canned goods, crackers and cereals in pasteboard boxes, part of a smoked ham, and a variety of other food, was in evidence. It was similar in many respects to the stuff the boys had purchased at the miners' general store in Poker Flat.

"Welcome to my humble home," said the stranger with a smile, stroking his beard and eyeing Jack with a peculiar look.

"Once more I thank you for rescuing me from those three rascals," said the boy, impressed by a certain resemblance the unknown bore to some one he had met before, but which was too indefinite for Jack to place. "I would like to know to whom I am under such great obligation."

"I am somebody whose life has been cut in twain by a dark void, as a mountain level is split in two parts by a yawning crevasse. My recollection of men and things extends but a brief period back. Beyond that the past is hidden as if by a thick, impenetrable curtain, which I try in vain to see through. The sensation I cannot describe, I can only say it is most peculiar. I possess a certain consciousness that warns me away from the deserted gulch below, and particularly from the men who have lately come here to work for gold. This I cannot understand. I have crouched in the bushes and looked at those men, and though not one of them wears a familiar look, save one, whom I believe I was

associated with in my unknown past, yet my inner consciousness bids me avoid them as one would a plague."

"That's funny," said Jack.

"Its meaning is beyond my comprehension. Further, something tells me we have met before. Yet that seems unlikely since you, in full possession of your own past, have not recognized me."

"I have the same impression. You put me in mind of some one I know, and yet to save my life I cannot tell who it is."

"What is your name?"

"Jack Wilson."

"Wilson! The name strikes a familiar cord. I must have known a Wilson."

"Have you been long in these regions?"

"Not over a week this side of Leadville."

"Leadville! Another familiar name. I occasionally visit a town in the mountains called Poker Flat, for supplies. When first I wandered into the place, like a man awakened from a deep sleep, I recognized it at once as a locality I seemed to be thoroughly familiar with, and yet I could not call it by name, not say when I had been there. I observed changes that had taken place in the picture—new buildings I could not place, new mines where I recalled rocks and brush—many changes, in fact. I asked what town it was, and I was asked where I had come from that I did not know this was Poker Flat. I looked for a familiar face, but recognized no one, nor was I myself recognized by a soul. The gulch below is equally familiar, with its deserted buildings, some not finished. How I came to lose my memory, and with it my identity, is a mystery I fear I shall never solve."

"It is too bad," said Jack. "If Poker Flat and Placer Gulch are——"

"Placer Gulch!" cried the stranger, with some energy in his tone. "Where is that?"

"Why, right below where the deserted houses are."

"Placer Gulch! That's the name. I've tried to think of it a hundred times. It wakens a flood of broken thoughts. Placer Gulch and I are connected by some tie that I may yet unravel, and when I do, perhaps the past will unroll before me like a panorama, and once more I will recognize myself, and the life I have lived," said the stranger, with some emotion.

"I hope so," said Jack.

"You said you came from Leadville?"

"Yes."

"Is it your home?"

"No. I claim no home now. I am an orphan and out on the world."

"Indeed! What induced you to come here?"

"I own a mining claim in the Gulch, left me by my father. My guardian, a shifty and dishonest man, leased the claim to a prospector and miner named Jim Whaley——"

"I have known that man. He is a direct link between me and the past. If I could find him——"

"That's easy. He is in the Gulch now. He is working my claim on the lease he secured from my guardian, Mr. Sprague."

"Ha! Sprague! Another familiar name. Boy! how is it that you know so much connected with my past. Even your name rings in my

ears like a trumpet note. Your face is familiar, I have already said. In heaven's name, how is it you do not recognize me? Can it be that my personality is so changed that were I to drop in among old friends and acquaintances I would pass among them as a stranger? Is it possible that one can alter in a few years so much as that?"

"You have been dead to the world but a short time if you can recognize Placer Gulch as a familiar landmark. The camp is hardly two and a half years old."

"How could I have altered past recognition in two years?"

"That tangled beard of yours is a very effective disguise. Perhaps if you were shaved it would make all the difference in the world. It is your eyes that remind me of—my father!" cried Jack in a thrilling tone, as remembrance asserted itself. "It can't be you are he!" he went on excitedly. "He was reported dead. Jim Whaley sent Mr. Sprague word that he died in Placer Gulch. That was over two years ago. And he sent with the letter the deed of the Lucky Strike claim my father owned."

The stranger tore at his head, paced the room in a fever of excitement, and threw his arms wildly about.

"The Lucky Strike! The Lucky Strike!" he cried. "I know it. I know it. The deed—the paper—the——"

Suddenly he grasped at his throat.

He whirled around, fell back on the couch and lay there unconscious.

CHAPTER XI.—Conclusion.

Jack was aghast over what had happened, and when he looked down at the unknown and saw him lying half on the couch as nerveless as a log, he feared that he was either dead or dying. He looked around for some water to dash in the man's face, and saw a flask of whisky about half full. Pouring some of this in a tin cup, he opened the unknown's mouth and let some of it trickle down his throat. The stranger coughed like one does when something goes against his breath, a strangling kind of cough, then he opened his eyes and sat up. The unknown stared at him, and then around the cavern, his face weaving a puzzled expression. Then his gaze returned to the boy's face.

"Am I dreaming?" he breathed. "Stand there and let me look at you."

He stepped back and ran his eyes over Jack.

"In heaven's name, boy, who are you?"

"I told you a while ago—my name is Jack Wilson."

"Jack Wilson—my son—my own boy, whom I left two years ago in Stormhaven! Can you have grown from a little boy of fourteen to the manly, sturdy lad you are now in two years?"

In another moment they were clasped in each other's arms. Then George Wilson held his son at arm's length and said:

"My son, you must explain how it is we have come together. This is a cave, apparently, in the mountains. Whereabouts are we? How did I come here? I have no recollection of having

been brought here, and I could not have come of my own accord, for my last remembrance centers around the prison pen in a deep ravine where I was put by my partner, Jim Whaley, to force me to reveal to him the spot where I had discovered a fresh vein of gold on my claim, richer by far than my first strike, and to take him in as my partner on even terms."

"You say you do not know how you came here?" said Jack, in surprise.

"I do not. Last night Jim Whaley visited me in my pen and, after a heated interview, he struck me down with the butt of his revolver, like the coward he is. That is all I remember until I came to my senses a few minutes ago and found myself here with you," said Wilson.

"And how long were you a prisoner in that pen?"

"Three months, as near as I can calculate."

"And before that where were you?"

"At work on my claim, which had petered out a few weeks before."

"Two years and a half ago Jim Whaley sent word to Mr. Sprague that you were dead—had just died of a mountain fever."

"What!"

"At the same time he enclosed in his letter the deed of the Lucky Strike claim, and a paper transferring the claim to the postmaster in trust for me, which he said you drew up before you died."

"I drew up no such paper. I never transferred the claim to Mr. Sprague. Why should I? I was in good health, and am in good health now—Great Scott! This beard! What does it mean?" cried Wilson, pulling at the long hair and realizing by the feel that it was the real thing. "Last night I had no beard to speak of—only a three month's growth of hair because I had not shaved since I was put in the pen. Now I have hair two feet long. In the name of heaven, boy, how did this happen?" cried the puzzled and alarmed man.

"Father, I see clearly the truth. You have been out of your mind for two years."

"Great Scott!" said Wilson. "I cannot understand all this. I am willing to swear that it was last night Whaley struck and knocked me unconscious."

"What year do you understand this to be?" said Jack, suddenly.

"Year! Why the fall of 1898, of course."

"It is the fall, the month of November, 1900."

"Impossible!"

Jack pulled a mining circular out of his pocket. It bore the date of November 4, 1900. George Wilson looked at it in a dumfounded sort of way. He had no recollection at all of his experiences since the moment Whaley struck him down in the wooden pen where he had been confined a close prisoner for a matter of three months. He had no remembrance of visiting Poker Flat, or of watching the operations of Whaley and his bunch as they worked on the Lucky Strike mine. Jack's joy now that he had found his father alive after believing him to be dead was great indeed. He told his father all about his life with Noah Sprague from the time his parent left him in the postmaster's charge. Then Jack told his father all that happened to him immediately after the arrival of Jim Whaley

in Stormhaven—the interview he had overheard between Whaley and Sprague—his determination to consult Lawyer Adams on the subject of the lease that night—how he had borrowed Gossett's sailboat, and with his friend, Billy Buster, had started across the harbor—how they got becalmed in the fog, and all that followed in consequence, which resulted in their reaching Placer Gulch. Jack told his father all about the interview he had had with Whaley that morning, when the man apparently backed down and seemed willing to give him the square deal he was after.

"The thing to be done now is to have Whaley arrested for conspiracy to defraud me, and get the claim away from him," said George Wilson.

"That's right," said Jack.

"Had matters not turned out as they have, Whaley would have held you a prisoner in one of the caves below, in the same way he did me, until he forced you to give up your efforts to get a square deal from him. Possibly he would have tried to compromise the matter by agreeing to pay you the money he intended handing over to Sprague."

The two men consulted about leaving the cave, rejoining Billy and making their way to Poker Flat, where Wilson intended to bring proceeding against Jim Whaley at once. As it was about noon they decided to start at once. They wondered what Whaley had done when his three associates returned and told him that Jack had been rescued by a stranger at the mouth of the outer cave. It was quite probable that he had gathered his forces, advanced on the cave and searched all the caverns in an effort to recapture the boy and take vengeance on the stranger. Foiled in this, it was reasonable to suppose the rascals had then searched the mountain slopes in an effort to find the pair, and probably were still in the hunt. The four revolvers now in the possession of Jack and his father would enable them to stand off the rascals if they encountered them on their way back to the building, where the boy knew Billy was impatiently awaiting his return. Dropping the rope down the hole, and lighting a taper each, they started to leave the cavern.

George Wilson went first. Although he had been up and down the route a hundred or more times in his other personality, it was all new to him now. Jack, however, told him all the points as he had noted them, and ten minutes later both of them were at the mouth of the outer cave. There was no sign of their enemies anywhere around, so they ventured out, and took their way through the defile, keeping their eyes on the watch all the time against a possible surprise. Nothing happened, and they finally caught sight of the Gulch.

Jack looked over toward the "hotel" and saw a figure standing in the middle of the road, which he believed was Billy. They made a detour around the edge of the Gulch, and on their way they had a good view of the front of the building where Whaley and his crowd held forth. They kept on, and gradually drew near the other end of the deserted camp. Jack finally recognized Billy sitting down at the door of the "hotel." Jack and his father came across the

camp, and Billy did not see them till they came out into the road. Then recognizing his friend, Billy sprang up and ran eagerly to meet him.

"Where have you been all this time?" he asked, looking inquisitively at George Wilson.

"After my square deal."

"Have you got it?"

"As much as I ever will get. I have done something better. I have found my father. Bill, let me introduce you to him. Father, this is Billy Buster, my best friend and ally."

"Why, I thought your father was dead," Billy said.

"I thought so, too; but it appears he wasn't. On the contrary, he's been very much alive all the time."

"How is it that you didn't know it, then?"

"You shall learn all about it later. For the moment I will simply tell you that Whaley was at the back of his disappearance."

They entered the "hotel," and over the midday meal, Billy was put in possession of all the facts. George Wilson and the boys lost no time in starting for Poker Flat, where they arrived that evening and put up at the hotel. Next morning Wilson got a shave and hair cut, and otherwise had himself fixed up, and then Jack easily knew his father as he remembered him. Other people in the town also recognized him, and asked him where he had been. He started the law in motion against Whaley, and two under sheriffs went to the Gulch to arrest him. He was not found there, nor were any of his party seen there either. Wilson took possession of his claim and all the rocks which had been taken out by the Whaley bunch. This was at once sent to the Poker Flat smelter, and ultimately yielded \$15,000, enabling Wilson to resume operations in proper shape, which in the meanwhile he carried on with the help of Jack, Billy and three hired men.

In far away Stormhaven, Sprague had been impatiently waiting to receive his first payment. After a lapse of nearly five months he began to think that Whaley intended to skin him, so leaving his store in charge of a friend he made his way to Poker Flat, and thence to the Gulch. There he met with the surprise of his life, and the call-down he received from George Wilson made his hair turn gray. After that the Lucky Strike claim became a real mine, another rush came to the Gulch, and panned out better than the first one, and as time passed the Wilson claim proved to be one of the richest in the West.

Next week's issue will contain "SILVER DOLLAR SAM; or, THE COIN THAT BROUGHT HIM LUCK."

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Benton—Have you tried all the remedies that your friends have recommended for your rheumatism? Tulser—Great Scott, no! I haven't had the pesky disease more than three years.

CURRENT NEWS

WILD CANARIES IN TOWN

Wild canaries have made their appearance in Medford, Ore., the past week and are vying with the sparrows and robins in the rush for food on the streets and lawns, although outnumbered by thousands.

The wild canary is not often seen in towns, liking the woods and rural regions best. One theory of their presence is that they have been driven from the hills by the snow and cold weather, which shut off their supply of insects. The wild canaries are descendants of tame canaries that escaped from cages, and are of two species, one a steel gray color and the other with bright yellow backs and steel gray underneath.

MANY TATTOO MARKS

Jacobus A. Van Dyn, sailor, of Johnnesburg, who claims to be the champion tattooed man of the world, has arrived in this city and is taking a rest between cruises at the Seaman's Institute, Second and Walnut streets, Philadelphia, Pa.

"Jake," as he is known, wears on both shoulders pictures of tropical butterflies in full wing. In the middle of his chest he carries the massed colors of the Allies. On his inner forearm are the

names of seven companions who were adrift with him in the Irish Sea after their ship was torpedoed in 1917.

Here, there and elsewhere over the arms, abdomen, chest and neck are gay hued moths, dripping daggers, links, hearts and other things.

SNAIL IS SLOW

What do you suppose is the actual speed made by a snail in traveling? One foot in four minutes, or at the rate of one mile in sixteen days, if traveling continuously.

These are figures given by George Zahnizer, a civil engineer of Newcastle, O., taken from actual observation.

A short time since Zahnizer was standing along the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad waiting for a train. He had nothing in particular to do and "killed a little time" by timing a snail which was creeping along the ground.

That snail traveled just exactly one foot in four minutes, Mr. Zahnizer says, and compiling distance at the rate of travel shown, Mr. Zahnizer has figured out that it would require sixteen days for that snail to move a mile.

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THE BOY WHO BEAT THE MOONSHINERS

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XVIII.

Through the Moonshine Trail.

Matthews muttered to himself, and his face twitched convulsively.

At last he admitted defeat, and agreed to the terms which the officials offered him.

Dan asked him for particulars.

"Well, then, ye've driven me to it—I'm doin' my best, and I hopes ye'll stand by me."

"I will stand by you," declared the sheriff. "I will never use your evidence against Newcastle or his men, so that you will not be on record as a traitor. Any man who would not show up a bunch of criminals to save the good name and freedom of his daughter would be a scoundrel, indeed. I will apply to the judge to give you a light term because you are not regularly in the gang."

The man breathed easier.

"I'll confess, sheriff, I am in the Newcastle layout, to the extent that I sell 'is likker to the rich buyers from Louisville and Saint Louis. But I ain't no murderer, and I wouldn't 'a' been in with Jake if I wasn't forced to do it. I want to save my gal, for she's a good one as ever lived, if she was brung up here in the wild country, and ain't had no book larnin'."

The sheriff led the man to the house, and to Dan and himself was unbared the secret means of slipping through the mountains to the fastness of Newcastle.

"Every road and lane and path'll be guarded," said Matthews, earnestly. "So ye'll have to climb the hills, till ye git past the line o' look-outs. Jake Newcastle has his place guarded like them army gin'rails does, an' he knows jest who passes on the roads, especially since Nance took the word that you'all was a-comin'."

"We climb the first line of hills—why, then we can't take our horses."

"No, sheriff," said Dan, remembering his past experiences. "I have been there, and I think the government forces can seize enough horses temporarily to get back, all right, our prisoners. But those men are always forewarned by the approach of horses, because every man owns a horse, no matter how poor, and every one rides. They would never think of our trying to get at them in a round-about way on foot."

"How do we find this here secret trail, then?" asked the sheriff.

"All we have to do is to climb over the big hill to the southeast of my farm and then the one

southwest of that. Then ye're past the lines of Newcastle's lookouts. He don't let all his men know this way of comin', for that's how he brings out the moonshine to sell."

"Go on."

"Once over these hills and ye could make it by easy roadway (exceptin' that the road would be guarded betwixt us an' there), ye hunt a little creek. By the side of that thar creek begins the secret trail. Ye kin tell the hoof-marks on it, even if it does look like it's in the heart of the wilderness. Newcastle and his men an' me, we aluz covers the trail by walking our horses through the creek fer about a quarter of a mile. It's shaller an' doesn't make no trail that way for folks to pick up on the other side of the stream."

"When you get it, what then?" inquired Dan, with justifiable eagerness. He had heard from Zachary Shank that there was some secret passage by which these men pursued their secret traffic in illegal whisky. But never before now had he realized how the way might be concealed from the sharp hunts of the revenue men.

"You follow that trail, on the other side o' the creek, an' it goes through the mountain valley, in a place whar no one much knows about. Thar's a gap in a ridge, an' it's through that whar ye travel—heavy underbrush an' trees jest cut away enough to let ye pass on. That leads ye straight on, for about four hours' ride, to the grove near Newcastle's place."

"Then we'll follow it, and if you have directed us right, no harm shall come to your daughter Nancy," said Dobson. "But if not—well, I won't be responsible."

Matthews was silent.

He was handcuffed and then allowed to lie down in one of his own beds.

The rest went to sleep, with the exception of Tom Dingle, who took a turn to guard their slumbers, while, as may be imagined, Dan was thoroughly worn out.

He had found that his arm was just barely nipped by the point of Matthews' knife—he had luckily stopped that action in time.

Next morning they searched the place carefully, beginning at daybreak. In hidden cellars they discovered many barrels and bottles of moonshine, which the sheriff promptly poured forth on the ground.

"Ah, but it's turrible to see fine likker goin' like that," sighed Matthews.

"Well, that much liquid deviltry is destroyed—and so a certain number of murders, robberies and worse crimes may have been committed before they ever developed, by this very act. The greatest thing that could be is to have every drop of the vile stuff poured into the earth."

They even found written records and books of account, in Newcastle's own handwriting, showing that he had a regular commercial system of the illicit sales.

(To be continued)

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

ENGLISH SPARROWS IN ALASKA

The English sparrow this spring has invaded Alaska for the first time. Reports received in Seattle, Wash., from Ketchikan say that several pairs of these hardy pioneers have taken up homesteads in awnings there. No one seems to have ever seen any of them there before.

For fifty years the English sparrow has been gradually working Westward and has become acclimated up and down the Pacific Coast from Mexico to Alaska. It is known to have arrived at Philadelphia about 1868 and was first seen in the Pacific Northwest ten years ago.

In the Puget Sound country it remains all winter and it is likely that it was during the winter that pairs migrated to Alaska or else they made an easy jump from places in British Columbia.

A pest everywhere, they have made themselves unusually irksome in the big wharfs and docks in Seattle. They make a large amount of litter in the upper braces of these buildings, the loose matter dropping into freight and express.

SURGEON CUTS LIVE WORM FROM HORSE'S EYE

One of the most remarkable operations in the history of veterinary surgery has just been performed by Dr. George Waddle, Kalamazoo, Mich., who removed a live worm known as a filiria equine, from the left eye of a horse.

The worm was about two inches in length. It was easily discernible through the enlarged pupil and against the dark background of the retina. It was the first eye worm ever found by Dr. Waddle in his thirty-eight years' experience in the United States and Canada, although the affliction is not an extraordinary one in Europe.

The operation was exceedingly difficult because of the delicate nature of the tissue, but the worm was extracted in fifteen minutes through the application of local anaesthetics. The surgeon believes that within a short time the horse will recover full use of its eye. The worm is developed from a microscopic germ carried to the eye by the blood and lodged in the peculiarly formed sac in the equine eyeball until it is fully developed as a worm. The horse is said to be the only animal in which the development of an eye worm is possible.

A NOVEL BIRD TRAP

The Field Museum in Chicago once became infested with a large number of obnoxious spiders. They festooned the ceiling and great columns of the building with yards of their shuttle work. Scrubwomen and janitors tried in vain to rid the building of the pests and their work. Finally a small bird, known as the brown creeper, discovered the state of things and decided to take up its abode inside and assist the authorities in ridding the building of the pests.

For several days the bird flitted about very much as it pleased, wagging up and down col-

umns and probing its bill into every crevice, and he actually carried on a very effective work.

One morning, however, as an official of the museum was passing, an attendant remarked to him that it looked very much as if the bird were done for, and a subject for the museum's collection. Glancing in the direction indicated by the attendant the officer saw that the bird lay panting on its side at the bottom of one of the columns.

"Catch a fly," said the scientist to his attendant, as he took the bird into his hands. The fly soon being forthcoming, it was held on the point of a pin to the bird's beak, and to the surprise of both men the creeper bit at it voraciously. That didn't look as if the little fellow were about to die. The scientist was much perplexed and wondered what was the matter with the bird.

Then, turning the bird over in his hand, he found it had been entrapped in a large spider's web, which had bound the wing and tail together in such a manner as to preclude flying. It looked as if some old, wise spider had resented the bird's work of extermination and had purposely ensnared him in a trap.

The queer bandage was removed and the bird darted out of the building and was soon lost to sight.

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THE IVORY TRADERS

By D. W. STEVENS

Tom Luff was first mate and part owner of the brig *Fearless*, and one of the jolliest, boldest tars that ever spun a yarn or reefed a topsail.

His craft was in the ivory trade, and so it happened that one day in February, after a long and tedious voyage, Tom looked over the taffrail as they entered the Congo and watched the canoes of the natives swarm about the ship with much satisfaction, for half his journey was over, and if this trip proved as profitable as the last the sea would know him no more, but sweet Nellie Blinn should double his joys and divide his sorrows in a snug little home far away before another twelve months rolled round.

Captain Budds, Tom's superior officer, knew of his mate's hope and longings, and shrewdly determined to utilize them.

The ivory trade was very profitable, but the inland trip to make the necessary purchases was a beastly piece of business.

Usually the captain had preformed it, taking with him half a dozen of his crew for a guard and a hundred or more river negroes for porters, but he desired to escape the hot and dangerous jaunt this time, and with this idea accosted the mate:

"Tom, I'm off the hooks—I'm strained and out of trim. I need docking; and am not fit to make the up-country trip for a week. But the Congo is a bad place to lie longer than one must, and I will tell you what I have been thinking. You might do the buying this time, seeing that you are interested, and in a hurry, too, and let me keep ship. You will do as well, if not better, than I could myself. What say you?"

Poor Tom was too deeply in love to hesitate long.

Anything which would hasten his return home he was willing to do, and so it was arranged that he should depart for the ivory marts the day following.

Five of the sailors accompanied him, and with them went eighty Congoes, to carry the barter and bring back the purchases.

Early morning found him upon the move, and with guides, porters and guards, in three days he had penetrated forty miles into the interior to the native village of Ovampa, meeting with no adventure other than the loss of one man while crossing a stream.

At Ovampa barter was had for two days, and twenty of the blacks turned back with two sailors to convey the ivory purchased to the brig.

The others continued some fifty miles farther into the country towards Batta, where large stores of the precious commodity were to be had.

Here again trade was successful, and almost without an unpleasant moment, aside from the terrible heat, Tom closed his purchases, and started with sixty well-laden negroes towards the coast again.

He had been absent twelve days; in twelve days more he should be on deck; then stow cargo, and away.

His heart was joyful.

The homeward route was different from the outward one, being shorter and to the south of the other, passing the country of the Yungos.

For five days he moved steadily onward; for five nights his men slept without alarm.

But upon the morning of the sixth day, a Yungo runner overtook him on his way from the hill country to the village of Batta, where the chief of the tribe dwelt, and reported bad news.

The Jinjes, a fierce and warlike nation from the east, were approaching the coast, burning, killing, eating all before them.

Already hundreds of captives were in their train; they had sacked the village of Batta, recently visited by the ivory buyers, and knew of their presence in the country; and the cannibal warriors were in hot pursuit of the white men.

Through all its bronze Tom's face turned pale. He looked about him.

Sixty unarmed, cowardly blacks, now half palsied with fear, three sailors with repeating rifles and cutlasses, and himself, to protect two thousands pounds' worth of ivory and their own lives from an army!

"How soon will they overhaul us?" he asked the Yungo.

"Before night," the man replied through an interpreter.

"And they will surely kill us if they catch us?" he continued.

The fellow nodded vigorously, and then added: "And eat you, too."

Tom turned to his porters.

"Every nigger for himself. Carry the tusks as far as you can right along the trail towards the river, then hide them in the bushes. The man that delivers his upon shipboard shall have double pay. Save yourselves as best you may. Go."

Then, addressing himself to the sailors, he said:

"Boys, it's not much use fighting, and it is too far to run. We must hide. Perhaps the black thieves may miss us after all."

The men agreed with him, and having made sure that the porters had disappeared, Luff and his companions turned northwards from the trail, and plunged into the most impenetrable forest to seek the deepest covert possible.

"It's a poor chance, mates," said Tom, "for those villains can follow like hounds; but if they find us, we will fight until we die, anyhow. Don't let them capture us, for they are cannibals."

The others readily assented—no man likes to be cooked and eaten—and they continued their laborious flight.

An hour brought them to a more open country, and two hours to a great plain covered with tall grass and reeds, near the center of which rose a castle-like mass of ragged rocks.

Tom uttered a cry of joy.

"The very place. If we can scale that, boys, we can defy the beasts even if they find us. We have fifty rounds of ammunition each, and our rifles will carry better than their bows. Once sheltered in these rocks we are safe. Captain Budds will be after us with forty of the crew if any of our party ever reach the ship. Come on."

New courage inspired the men.

Following the brave mate, they dashed through the tall grass, thoughtless alike of reptile or beast that might there lie concealed, and were soon at the foot of the ledge.

Then they surveyed it carefully from all sides, and, to their great joy found but one possible point of ascent.

"Sling your guns, my hearties!" cried Tom. "Sling your guns and mount."

Quickly obeying him, they scrambled like monkeys up the ragged side, creeping, crawling, climbing with hands and feet, until at last they stood together upon a little shelf almost at the summit. Then they halted.

"There. Now let 'em come!" said Luff, seating himself. "Only one at a time can use that staircase, and we'll 'tend to him before he gets here. We're out of range of their arrows and spears, and before they can starve us the captain will be here with the rescue party. Boys, keep up a good heart. We are safe. Arrange a watch and put me in, but I must rest now," and closing his eyes, he was instantly asleep.

It lacked two hours of night.

Dick Longstreet, one of the men, proposed that both the others should also sleep, while he alone watched.

"One's enough," said he, "and I'll wake ye at moon-rise."

Seating himself where his eye could cover the country over which they had just passed, the sailor began his vigil.

He felt sure that the Jinjes would follow them, and he was particularly anxious to draw trigger on the first black head that appeared in the tall grass below.

Longstreet had been in Africa before, and it was said had suffered capture and imprisonment once by some of these very coast tribes.

It was revenge which animated the man now.

He had not long to wait, for his suspicions were correct.

The Jinjes did follow them, and just as the sun disappeared behind the distant mountain-tops in the Quango country, he saw a dark line of warriors issue from the forest, and begin to wind slowly across the plain towards his post.

Without moving, a deadly glance lit his eye, and he raised his heavy rifle to his face and waited.

But not for long.

When the advance guard of the negroes was within a hundred yards of the rock Longstreet pressed the trigger.

The roar of the piece was mingled with the startled cries of his companions behind him, the wild death-shriek of the wretch who was hit, and a mad chorus of yells from the astounded Jinjes, who instantly filled the air with a flight of arrows and then fled towards the forest, but not until a second, a third, and even a fourth had bitten the dust before the sailor's unerring aim.

The battle was fairly opened.

"Ye shot well, Dick," said Tom, as he examined his own weapon, "and we must all do so. No bullets to waste here. The villains will make a charge just in the twilight. If we tip 'em over fast enough, then they'll keep away until morning."

The mate was right.

Just as the sun had fairly hidden himself the blacks issued from the woods in great numbers and dashed through the grass towards the rocks, yelling and waving their spears.

Under Luff's orders the little quartette waited until the great surging mass had swept close up to their citadel, until a single file of climbers strove to ascend the very path by which they had reached the summit, then they fired.

Volley after volley of balls from the repeating weapons pierced the unprotected enemy.

The scalers were swept away as foam before the breath of the wind, the lines about the foot of the rock wavered, writhed, and then broke, and as the leaden storm continued the whole mass of savages, with great cries of rage and fear, fled a second time towards the shelter of the forest.

The night attack was repulsed.

"We can rest now until sun-up," said Tom, throwing himself upon the ground. "We must have finished a good number of those beasts. They won't come again soon. It's a—by heaven! What's that?"

He sprang to his feet again, and pointed towards the distant forest.

A sudden flame had sprung up and was running along the dry grass.

"The demons have fired the jungle. If the wind holds it will drive the flames directly upon us here."

"But there's no grass up here," assured Dick Longstreet. "The fire cannot climb these bare rocks."

"No," replied the mate, "but the terrible heat and dense smoke will suffocate us, and beneath the cover of the fire the blacks will attack us again. We are lost!"

But Longstreet had suddenly arisen, and with a sailor's weather-eye, was scanning the dark heavens above and beyond the fire.

"It comes! It comes! The wind shifts! See!" he continued and he pointed towards the plain below. "The flames turn! Ha! now, villains, you shall be roasted in your own furnace!" and he shouted aloud.

It was true.

The wind had suddenly shifted, and was now blowing a gale from the opposite quarter of the heavens.

The fire, urged backwards, was already surrounding the swarming, writhing army of the Jinjes, whose cries of terror and despair rang above the roar of the flames, and in less time than it takes to tell it, the fierce and deadly danger that had menaced the white men had proved their salvation.

The forest and plain became a great furnace, and the African army was in the midst.

* * * * *

Midnight looked down upon a blackened country, gleaming here and there with bits of flame, and dull, dying coal; morning showed the sailors an open pathway of escape.

And as they trod the yet heated earth, and clambered over the charred ruin of the forest, all about them lay the blackened, twisted, burnt remains of their enemies.

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NEW YORK, JUNE 23, 1922

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

CAUGHT BIG SHARK

An 850-pound shark was caught in a net in Jones Inlet, L. I., the other day. C. E. Ewatling, a fisherman saw the huge fish entangled in the net, and with the help of eight other men killed it, after an hour's work, and brought it to shore. Sharks infested these waters in 1916.

SNEAKED UP ON HUGE TROUT

A brown trout weighing 81-4 pounds, 2 feet 4 inches long was shown recently as a catch from Broad Brook, East Hampton, Mass., by Grant Craig, a boy of fifteen years. When young Graig hooked the big fish he tied his line to a tree, jumped into the water and grabbed the prize with both hands.

GIRL, 16, IS BOOTLEGGER

Miss Sarah Levi, sixteen, youngest person ever brought before the District Court, of Springfield, Mass., on a liquor charge and who admitted that she had saved \$1,500 while supporting several brothers and sisters from the profits of the moonshine business, was fined \$100 and received a suspended reformatory sentence recently.

The court ruled that she must remove from her present home in a locality where much moonshining has been brought to light.

FLEXIBLE KEY TO FOIL PICK-LOCK BURGLARS

A flexible key, one that will go into and work in a tortuous hole, has been developed in Germany, says *Scientific American*. The many robberies that are constantly reported everywhere have created a demand for such a key. The wards and the bow are not connected by a stiff stem, but by four superimposed strands of ribbon steel which prevent any sidewise movement when the key comes into play. Thus there need not be a straight-way between the escutcheon on the front of the door and the actual keyhole in the lockcase, which can be fixed at an entirely different level, and the point of introduction for the key is independent of the locking point.

Between the outside and inside fittings there is a tubular channel with a slit in the bottom to allow the passage of the wards. This channel in German is called "Schlusselzufuhrungsschiene," or literally "key-conveying rail," a word long enough to insure the prevention of burglary. The housebreaker is unable to determine the position of the locking mechanism, nor can he open it with a false key, a wire brush or a strip of lead. To blast it open is out of the question, as the explosive would fall out through the slit in the key-way made for the passage of the ward.

The flexible key is not as unwieldy as one might expect, because it can easily be rolled up into a spiral and put into a neat case to fit the pocket of its legitimate proprietor.

LAUGHS

"I understand when Smith went out for the first time in his new machine he struck quite a gait." "I believe he struck about a dozen gates before he finished the machine."

"Has your piano an automatic attachment?" queried the persistent agent. "No, it ain't," said the lady of the house, "but it has a sheriff's attachment, and I reckon that's enough."

"Be mine. I cannot live without you." "Bah!" said the heiress. "You have lived without me for years." "True," retorted the Duke, "but the cost of living has gotten to me at last."

Schoolmaster (at end of object lesson)—Now, can any of you tell me what is water? Small and Grubby Urchin—Please, teacher, water's what turns black when you put your 'ands in it!

A quack doctor was holding forth about his "medicines" to a rural audience. "Yes, gentlemen," he said, "I have sold these pills for over twenty-five years and never heard a word of complaint. Now what does that prove?" From a voice in the crowd came: "That dead men tell no tales."

"What is this civil service business that they are always talking about?" asked the Boob. "What does it do?" "It's like this," replied the Cheerful Idiot. "If you have a job and you are not under civil service, they can fire you any time they want to. But if you have a job under civil service, they can't fire you unless they want to."

When the butcher answered the telephone, the shrill voice of a little girl greeted him: "Hello! Is that Mr. Wilson?" "Yes, Bessie," he answered kindly, "what can I do for you?" "Oh, Mr. Wilson, please tell me where grandpa's liver is! The folks are out and I've got to put a hot flannel on it and I don't know where it is."

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FROM ALL POINTS

RAT KILLS BIG SNAKE

A five-foot water snake was killed by a big rat on the river bank, Seaford, Del., in a half hour battle. The victor slunk into the bushes nearby, badly winded, but little harmed.

The snake had crawled out on the mud flat near the railroad wharf to sun itself when the rat attacked. Curling, it repeatedly struck at the rat, but rarely drove its fangs through the fur.

The rat kept up its fight with quick rushes, springing in to inflict a gash with its teeth and leaping back when the snake struck. During the whole half hour the fight raged fiercely.

When the snake had worn itself out the rat sprang on it with all four feet and, taking a tight hold with its teeth, broke the snake's back.

Railroad employees viewed the fight, but the combatants paid no attention to them.

STRANGE OCCUPATIONS

Out in Uncle Sam's back woods of Oregon and Washington there are a flock of curious industries giving livelihood to many folks.

Among these strange jobs is that of gathering the cast-off antlers of deer, elk and moose. These relics that annually fall from the forest creatures are utilized by a firm in Tacoma, Wash., in the manufacture of cribbage boards, napkin rings, knife and umbrella handles and other articles. The pay for a pair of antlers is about \$1.

An unusual occupation engaged in by a number of men is the searching for and gathering of lily bulbs, fern roots, shrubs of various kinds, seedlings of evergreens and wild flowers for Eastern nurseries.

The Northwest woods yield beautiful wild yellow lilies known as Humboldt and various shades of pond or water lilies, one especially possessing huge pads, upon which moose and musquash feed.

Side money is earned by forest rangers in late autumn by scooping up ladybugs from their dens in the mountains. These insect eaters congregate after the first frost in rocky crevices and become dormant. The foresters gather them and put them into boxes until nearly spring, when they are sold to orchardists to prey upon plant lice.

PINEAPPLES HAVE STRANGE COUSINS

The pineapple belongs to a very interesting family of plants, called the Bromelads, all of which are purely American, and none of which were known in the Old World until imported from the New. Most of these are natives of Brazil. There are about thirty species of this family on exhibition in the greenhouses of the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and this is the best time of the year to visit them.

The pineapple is the only member of the family that produces a large fruit formed by thickening its flower axis and by inclosing its seeds in fleshy braces. It is also peculiar in the fact that it grows on the earth, instead of up among the branches of trees or on rocks, as do nearly all its relatives. These are like the orchids in many respects; they draw no sustenance from the earth

through their roots but live on rain. This they catch in their leaves, which are rolled into perfectly water-tight reservoirs.

Some of them have very beautifully colored leaves, others brilliant and showy flowers; and, strange as it may seem, the Florida "moss" which hangs in festoons from trees in the Southern States is one of this family and a first cousin of the luscious pineapple.

ENGLAND'S "LOST MONEY"

There is treasure in London awaiting the taking. Millions of pounds of "lost money" is hidden away in the Government treasury, and so far as is known nobody owns it. Every three years the Chancery Division of the High Court of Justice in London issues a long list of the various funds in court to which there are no known claimants.

These funds have come into the court in different ways, some of them in large amounts, some in small, and in every case the money is the legal property of some person, but the identity of the owner is unknown. These amounts, collectively, are known as "the dormant funds." The money has been accumulating for 200 years.

"The dormant funds" have been the basis for the springing up in London of a strange profession whose members earn a living by tracing down unsuspecting heirs and offering to prove to them that they are owners of fortunes. It is no easy profession. A tremendous amount of work must be done in searching for an heir. The first procedure of the men is to discover which particular fund is of a large enough amount to make investigation worth while, and to get this information a girl is constantly employed in the Court Records office digging out all possible details.

Frequently it is the case that a year or two years is spent on a successful search for an heir. The search occasionally leads to America or the British colonies on the trail of an heir who perhaps left England 100 years ago.

The authority on which the "dormant funds" are held is in an act of Parliament of 1723.

If the person thinks he or she is the legal heir to a part of the funds it is still very difficult to get it. Frequently old ladies write and inclose some such proof as a copy of a letter written by a father or a grandfather, asserting that his heirs could get £50,000 by writing to the court. This is too little proof.

After all, the best way to get money out of the "dormant funds," if it is due, is to put the matter into the hands of the professional treasure hunters. They know that fuller proofs are required.

Now and then attempts by fraud are employed, but such efforts are rarely successful.

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GOOD READING

"MY OLD KENTUCKY HOME" NOW STATE GAME REFUGE

Kentucky can now be included among the States having State game refuges. By proclamation Governor E. P. Morrow has set aside the old Rowan home at Bardstown, where Foster wrote "My Old Kentucky Home." It comprises an estate of 236 acres, heavily wooded and well adapted to bird protection. Dr. R. S. Tuttle, executive agent of the Kentucky Game and Fish Commission, says it is an ideal spot for a bird refuge. The commission has already stocked the place with bob-whites, which are doing well. The State will also construct a fish hatchery upon the the property for rearing pond fish.

GRASSHOPPERS FLY TO SEA

A number of large grasshoppers were picked up at sea 600 miles from land by the shipping board freighter West Himrod, on her recent trip from the Orient.

Besides the insects that alighted on the decks the sea was dotted with those that had fallen from sheer exhaustion.

The grasshoppers were capable of doing enormous damage to vegetation because of their giant proportions, being an average of three inches long. Those brought in by the ship's officer seem equipped with large air sacs in addition to the regular breathing tubes. Local biologists declare such grasshoppers are able to fly long distances, then alight on the water, being bouyed up by the air sacs.

It is believed the flight of insects came from one of the islands of the Aleutian group, where they are usually very abundant in spring months.

ALL HIS LIFE IN DITCHES

It might be said, and truthfully, that the greater number of the working hours of William G. (Gas) Wood's life of more than eighty-six years have been spent in a ditch, for this still hale and hearty man of Fairmount, Ind., has been digging ditches all his life. More than that, he is still digging ditches and he hopes to continue, for he thinks there is no more health giving occupation in the world than ditching.

Grant County, in which Fairmount is situated, is level country for the most part. In early pioneer days, before the land was drained, it was damp and swampy. But now its fields, almost as rich and productive as fertile land, has "blind" ditches. In this drainage scheme which has been under way for almost a century, Mr. Wood has had a big part.

To a city bred man it might appear that no unusual ability is required in so simple a matter as ditching, but in ditching, as in everything worth while, there is a right way and a wrong way, so says Mr. Wood, who long ago found the right way to put down a ditch.

In spite of the fact that he will be eighty-seven years old next July, Mr. Wood's services are still preferred over those of younger men by many employers in this community.

AN IRISH SEA SERPENT

This being the time for the annual Spring crop of sea-serpents the public in London is being regaled with a new one of Irish nationality.

Its Irish name is the "Gorramooloch." It can not only swim and lash its tail in orthodox sea-serpent manner, but reports from the West Coast of Ireland, where it is alleged to have been seen frequently, credit it with the power of flight.

According to inhabitants of the wilder parts of the coast of Connemara, Mayo and Donegal, the "Gorramooloch" frequently turns up for exhibition stunts, principally at night. It is described as being shaped like a porpoise, 100 feet long, and rushing through the water with the speed of an express train. Occasionally it would leap out of and forward over the water a distance equal to its own length. When it fell back into the sea again the splash was said to sound like the crack of a three-inch gun.

The fact that these creatures are not seen more often is because, it is explained, they appear principally at night. It is then that they go a hunting after the gannet, a sort of sea-gull. When they see one flying near the surface of the ocean they leap out of the water 40 or 50 feet and, gliding, by the aid of their large wing-like fins, guided by their vertically-set tail, bring down the bird.

Fishermen, curiously enough, consider the appearance of the "Gorramooloch" to be a sign of bad luck, though it has not yet been reported to be cannibalistic. But there is another brand of sea-serpent which they fear more as a sign of ill omen. This one is yclept the "Bo-dree-more." It is said to be a huge whale-like animal, so large and powerful that it chases whales for sport. According to local superstition, the sight of a "Bo-dree-more" means certain ill-luck for the men and the craft who spot it.

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CHINESE DENTISTS PULL TEETH WITH FINGERS

Although the Chinese boast that nothing is new to them, and that all the arts and sciences are old stories in China, it is still true that for operations in dentistry we would hardly care to go to a Chinese.

The work of old-time Chinese dentists is ludicrously primitive. The operator extracts all teeth with his fingers. From youth to manhood he is trained to pull pegs from a wooden board, and this training changes the aspect of the hand and gives him a finger grip that is equivalent to a lifting power of three or four hundred pounds.

For toothache he employs opium, peppermint. Sometimes he fills and clove oil. Sometimes he fills teeth, but he does it so poorly that the fillings fall out after a few months.

There is an element of superstition in his work, for he asserts that all dental troubles are brought on by tooth worms, and he always shows the nerve pulp to the patient as such a worm. For humbugging purposes also the dentist carries about in his pocket some white grubs, and after he has extracted a tooth he shows a grub to the sufferer as the cause of all the trouble.

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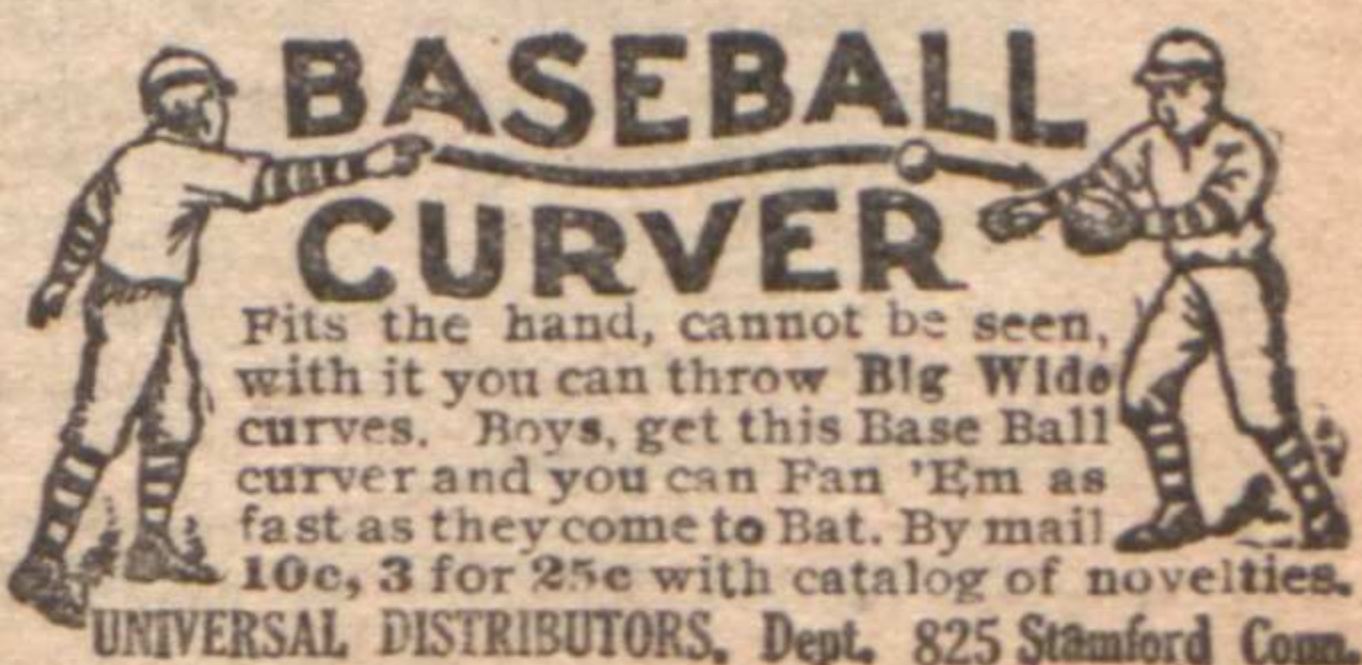
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Present Occupation..... Age.....

How I increased my salary more than 300%

by
Joseph Anderson

I AM just the average man—twenty-eight years old, with a wife and a three-year-old youngster. I left school when I was fourteen. My parents didn't want me to do it, but I thought I knew more than they did.

I can see my father now, standing before me, pleading, threatening, coaxing me to keep on with my schooling. With tears in his eyes he told me how he had been a failure all his life because of lack of education—that the untrained man is always forced to work for a small salary—that he had hoped, yes, and prayed, that I would be a more successful man than he was.

But no! My mind was made up. I had been offered a job at nine dollars a week and I was going to take it.

That nine dollars looked awfully big to me. I didn't realize then, nor for years afterward, that I was being paid only for the work of my hands. My brain didn't count.

THEN one day, glancing through a magazine, I came across the story of a man just like myself. He, too, had left school when he was fourteen years of age, and had worked for years at a small salary. But he was ambitious. He decided that he would get out of the rut by training himself to become expert in some line of work.

So he got in touch with the International Correspondence Schools at Scranton and started to study in his spare time at home. It was the turn in the road for him—the beginning of his success.

Most stories like that tell of the presidents of great institutions who are earning \$25,000 and \$50,000 a year. Those stories frighten me. I don't think I could ever earn that much. But this story told of a man who, through spare time study, lifted himself from \$25 to \$75 a week. It made an impression on me because it talked in terms I could understand. It seemed reasonable to suppose that I could do as well.

I tell you it didn't take me long that time to mark and send in that familiar coupon. Information regarding the Course I had marked came back by return mail. I found it wasn't too late to make up the education I had denied myself as a boy.

I was surprised to find out how fascinating a home-study course could be. The I. C. S. worked with me every hour I had to spare. I felt myself growing. I knew there was a bigger job waiting for me somewhere.

Four months after I enrolled my employer came to me and told me that he always gave preference to men who studied their jobs—and that my next



salary envelope would show how much he thought of the improvement in my work.

Today, my salary is more than 300% greater than it was when I began my studies. That increase has meant a better home and all the luxuries that make life worth while.

What I have done, you can do. For I am just an average man. I had no more education to begin with than you have—perhaps not as much. The only difference is a matter of training.

TO every man who is earning less than \$75 a week, I say simply this:—*Find out what the I. C. S. can do for you!*

It will take only a minute of your time to mark and mail the coupon. But that one simple act may change your whole life.

If I hadn't taken that first step four years ago I wouldn't be writing this message to you today! No, and I wouldn't be earning anywhere near \$75 a week, either!

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